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MADEMOISELLE MORI:

A

TALE OF MODERN ROME.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1862.

"D'abord je suis *femme*, avec les devoirs, les affections, les sentiments d'une femme; et puis je suis *artiste*."

MADAME VIARDOT GARCIA.

"Come, make a circle round me, and mark my tale with care,
A tale of what Rome once hath borne, of what Rome yet may bear."

MACAULAY.

MADEMOISELLE MORI.

CHAPTER I.

> Thou art in ROME! the city that so long
> Reigned absolute, the mistress of the world.
> ROGERS.

ONE Sunday evening in October, the English congregation were pouring out of the room which served them as a church, outside the Porta del Popolo. The English season at Rome had just begun. A long file of carriages was waiting, and they successively came up to the door, and drove off, either to various residences, or to the Pincian Hill. The walkers turned into the gardens of Villa Borghese, the gates of which stood invitingly open close at hand; or crossed the Piazza, and fell into the crowd in the three streets branching from it. Some ascended the Pincian Hill, which the Italians, ever dreading the unhealthy hour of sunset, were already leaving; so that there was a double stream of vehicles and foot-passengers, one descending and the other ascending the winding way. Ample as the road was, it hardly contained the crowds tempted out by the fine afternoon to this charming place, once the *Collis Hortulorum*, and still a region of gardens, as much as in the days of Sallust and Lucullus.

If the piazzas and streets below had not been equally crowded, all Rome might have been supposed on the

Pincio. Languages from all parts of the world were heard there; foreigners and natives were blended together. Here, a magnificent Armenian prelate walked, with stately air and flowing beard, beside a white-robed Dominican. There, a group of Americans, of English, of Germans, passed by. Here, again, a Frenchman exchanged no very friendly glances with a slender, dark Italian. Now, all the crowd pressed hastily together into the angles of the road, as a carriage, containing two Italian ladies reclining luxuriously in it, dashed along. Nurses, distinguished by their crowns of bright ribbon and long silver pins; priests in their various habits, were conspicuous and abundant; but in the whole throng there was hardly a Roman from the country; all on the Pincio were inhabitants of the city, and no particular *festa* had called the dwellers in the Campagna into Rome. It was only such a crowd and such a scene as may be witnessed on the Pincian Hill on any fine Sunday in autumn.

Amongst those of the English congregation who made it their way home from church were a young brother and sister, followed by a spaniel, which had been waiting for them at the door. As they mingled with the crowd, their appearance was so foreign, and their Italian so pure, that no one would have supposed them to be English, though the boy's tall, slender figure and bright complexion were unlike those of a Roman. They paused for a few moments in an angle of the wall, looking down into the gardens below, whence the warm, perfumed breath of the China roses came up in gusts, and where lizards and butterflies coquetted together. A carriage passed, and a lady in it remarked them, and asked her companion who they were, saying, "If I

had not seen them in our church, I should have taken them for Italians."

"So they are, in fact. I do not know much about them, but I believe the father was a young English artist, who married a Neapolitan girl. I suppose he met with her in some expedition into *il Regno*, as they call Naples. I remember seeing a portrait of her once when we went to his studio, and a beautiful creature she must have been—with one of those pure Greek faces which you see at Sora or Capri. She died, and left him this girl and boy; and some one said the other day that he was dead too."

"How do they live?"

"I do not know; on the boy's earnings, probably. Oh, you do not know how little people can live on here, or you would not look incredulous. Yet I sometimes think that poverty is worse here than in England; there are so many families who once were better off, and are going steadily down hill. And it is so hopeless. What can one do?"

"Ah, the priests dislike the English helping or visiting their people?"

"Oh, some do, and some do not. Some are glad to let their people get part of the alms at the English church; others would not hear of it."

"Do you see anything of the poor here?"

"I did, when I first came here, with my English notions; but it is so disheartening, the cases are so endless and so hopeless. And it is a most unfortunate thing to get the name of being charitable, one has no peace—and then one gets so shockingly imposed upon. I do assure you, Mrs. Dalzell, you would not believe me, if I told you the frauds that people, as

well off as you or I, will practise to get a few pauls. I am quite in earnest; the spirit of independence, or honesty either, is entirely wanting here. And then I know that the people take what one gives, and hate one all the time as something worse than a pagan. They call converts from our Church to theirs *Nuovi Cristiani*, New Christians. Religion is, of course, a forbidden subject, and I have lost all heart, and feel sure I am being taken in when an Italian talks me into being charitable. I have learnt to resist their pathetic entreaties at last. Ah, you look dissatisfied; but if ever you live here, you will find philanthropy to be all very well in theory, but mightily disagreeable in practice at Rome."

Mrs. Dalzell made no reply, and bent forward to look at the road, some turns of which now lay below them. She distinguished the brother and sister again, slowly ascending in the throng, and asked if they had been brought up as Protestants.

"I suppose so. Yes, they must be Protestants, for Italian Romanists are strictly prohibited from setting foot within our church. The boy is a handsome fellow, is he not? I should like to know if they have any friends here. Well, we must drive down, or you will miss the *table d'hôte*. I wonder why Italian women will wear white bonnets! Did you see that one? Frightful, is it not? Have you decided on going into lodgings?"

"My old friend, Madame Marriotti, recommends me to do so."

Meanwhile, the boy and girl had reached the door of the French Academy, and instead of following the stream of promenaders to the gardens above, they went

in, and asked the porter for the key of the Bosco, which was given, and they entered a grove of ilexes, whose gloomy shade effectually shut out the radiant sunshine that still illuminated the western sky.

"Now the bread, Vincenzo," said the girl, in Italian; "see, see, there he is," and she held out her hands caressingly to a white goat, which was browsing amid the rank herbage, and feigning to take no notice of them. "Come! *vien, vien qua!* Oh, see the creature!" as the spaniel, which had been racing in another part of the wood, came into sight, and the goat, startled out of coquettish indifference, gave an extraordinary caper, and rushed upon him. Vincenzo and his sister were too much overcome with laughter to interfere in the duel, which ended with the dog's taking refuge between his owners, while the goat pirouetted indignantly at a little distance.

"Come, if we are to see the sunset, we must make haste, Irene," said Vincenzo; "Nanna will certainly think we are lost, and eat the *ricotta* all herself. What are we going to have for supper? Come, tell me!"

"You greedy boy! Don't suppose I shall tell you. Nanna would never forgive me if I spoiled her treat in that way."

"How she must rack her good old head every *festa* to get the something to make us a surprise," said Vincenzo, as they advanced towards a long and exceedingly steep flight of steps, leading up a high mound clothed with ilexes. "I believe it is what she thinks of from one holiday to another."

"And I think of what you are doing in the studio. Ah, Vincenzino, when you are a great sculptor!"

"Ah, when!" repeated her brother. "Do you remember the sculptor who sold nothing for fourteen years? Fourteen years of working and waiting, and hoping and despairing, Irene!"

"And we can work, and wait, and hope too, but not despair," said Irene, eagerly. "Fortune came at last to him, and so it will to us—and any way, you must be a sculptor."

"Ay," said Vincenzo, looking out on the magnificent view which now lay before them as they attained the miniature temple on the top of the mound and above the wood, "it is not for the fame or the fortune; it is for itself, Irene!"

Both stood still, side by side, gazing silently on the city, where dome and bell-tower stood out against a sky of gold; the desolate Monte Mario and its stone pines rising dark to the right. Behind, close at hand, were sombre ilex woods, amid which rose here and there the spire of a cypress, or a ruined arch, and on the highest point, the white Villa Ludovisi; beyond, stretched the Campagna, girdled by hills melting into light under the evening sky.

"It is something to be a Roman," said Vincenzo, at last.

"And a Roman sculptor," added his sister.

"You must come to the studio some day, Irene; I want to show you my copy of the *Flora*. I can tell you, it was a great honour to be chosen to make it. Alberti had no time, or else I don't suppose Signor Trajano would have chosen me. Ah! the light is going."

"*Ave Maria* when you hear, look you that your house be near," said Irene, quoting a familiar Roman

proverb; "but before we go, can you get me that bit of *smilace?* See," she added, pointing to a graceful plant wreathed round a neighbouring ilex. "There, see that bough; it will look beautiful round Santa Lucia, and you could copy it for a frame."

"I see; stand out of the way," said Vincenzo, advancing to the side of the flight of steps which was undefended by railing or balustrade. He leant lightly forward, stretching his lithe figure as far as he could, and reaching after the plant, while Irene ran down the steps so rapidly, that she came headlong into the arms of a stranger, as he turned a corner of the mound, and was about to ascend. Her exclamation made Vincenzo start upright to see what had occurred. He set his foot on a pebble which chanced to be on the step, slipped, lost his balance, strove in vain to recover himself, and fell down the whole flight of steps with frightful violence. He lay as if dead for some minutes, and when Irene wildly implored him to speak—to look at her—and the stranger, who had innocently caused the disaster, raised him, he only answered by faint moans of pain. Presently he recognised his sister, uttered her name, and tried to rise with the help of the stranger; but the suffering caused by the movement showed that serious injury had occurred. The stranger asked, first in French, and then in tolerable Italian, where he felt hurt.

"My back," he answered in a faint whisper; then, perceiving Irene's terror, "Don't be frightened, only I cannot walk home yet."

Nor could he endure to be carried when they tried to lift him.

"You are Italian! Where do you live? Let me

get a carriage for you; I fear you must wait here awhile, but I will make all possible speed. My name is De Crillon, Colonel de Crillon," said the stranger, laying the poor boy's head tenderly upon Irene's lap.

She thanked him by a look. He hastened away, and she sat waiting while the weary time passed on. The gloom of the ilexes deepened; the sun had set, and the rapid Italian night was come. The bell of the neighbouring convent rang for the *Ave Maria*, but still no one came to the help of the two poor children. Vincenzo was too much exhausted by pain to continue the comforting words which he had at first tried to speak; his breath came feeble and fluttering; Irene was dumb with fear and grief, and sat with tears rolling down her cheeks, and one arm passed closely round the neck of her dog, as if even his presence was a comfort, and the other hand on Vincenzo's damp forehead. A rustle gave her hope, but no one came; it was but the white goat come to peer inquisitively at them. It seemed as if hours had passed; all was still again—surely all the world had forgotten them; yet it was not so very long in reality before voices and steps came near, and Colonel de Crillon hurried up.

"My poor friend! Have you been in much pain? Every carriage was engaged; I could not find one. Here is something, at last, and these good men will carry you very carefully. Here, my men, lift him gently, gently—that's it," as by his gesture rather than by his foreign Italian they comprehended, and laid the boy in a sheet which they had brought with them. But no tenderness could save Vincenzo from anguish which wrung irrepressible moans from him even while he gasped out, "It's nothing: don't mind,

Irene," and the transit over the rough pavements was a trial that ended in actual fainting.

Colonel de Crillon accompanied them to their dwelling, and bade Irene hasten upstairs to warn her friends and prepare a bed to receive Vincenzo at once. There was no one to warn except the old servant who had nursed them, and who, as Irene ran up to the rooms they occupied on a third floor, came to the top of the staircase, with indignant voice uplifted to a shrill shriek—

"Oh! terrible children! Do you wish to kill me with sorrow? Is this an hour? Child! what has happened?" suddenly perceiving Irene's frightened aspect.

"Oh! Vincenzo has fallen down the steps of the Bosco," answered Irene, amid choking tears; "they are carrying him upstairs now."

Quite overpowered, she hid her face and gave way to her sobs, while old Nanna hastened down scolding and lamenting. The sight of Vincenzo carried up senseless, called forth a new outburst, as she stood on the stairs, with vehement gestures and tones, preventing any one from passing, and quite unconscious of being in the way. The men who carried him did not know what had caused the accident. Colonel de Crillon could not muster Italian enough to explain, nor could he comprehend the local Italian spoken by Nanna.

"My good woman," he exclaimed, at last, "you really must let us pass by. Where is the boy's father or mother?"

"Father or mother, did the Signor say? They

have none but me; orphans are they, the blessed children!"

Without further ceremony he pushed by her, and ran upstairs till he reached an open door, where sounds of sobbing directed him to Irene. He was getting thoroughly annoyed, and spoke sharply—

"Signorina, are you aware that we are losing a great deal of time? Be so kind as to speak to your servant, and request her not to stand wailing over your brother as if she were a weeping willow, but to fetch a doctor."

Irene stood up, looking so scared and wretched that his heart smote him as if he had been cruel to a child.

"Pardon, if I speak like a savage, but indeed it is most important to waste no more time. Our first thought must be how to relieve him."

"Yes," she answered, collecting herself with effort, and still shaken by repressed sobs. "I am sorry. Papa used to be angry when I cried. What ought I to do?"

"Ah! she has let him pass," muttered Colonel de Crillon. "Now we must have him put to bed directly, and then—here, lay him down softly. I'll fetch a doctor myself. The old hag! can't she keep herself quiet?"

"He opens his eyes!—he knows us!" exclaimed Irene, springing towards him, but stopped by Colonel de Crillon. "I will not talk; I will do just what you tell me. Vincenzo—oh, dear Vincenzo! Nanna, let me see his face. This good gentleman says he will go for a doctor."

M. de Crillon, however, thought that the boy would never be safely laid in bed without his superintendence,

though Irene now showed more self-control and helpfulness than he had imagined she could possess. He gave the men something and got rid of them, and returned to help in undressing Vincenzo, growing meanwhile more exasperated every moment by Nanna's incessant chattering. Vincenzo had revived to entire consciousness, and when M. de Crillon had laid him tenderly in bed, the boy clasped his hand and feebly murmured thanks, and Irene's liquid eyes were even more eloquent. "It is nothing; let me seek a doctor," said he, with a smile; and Nanna, looking from the window, saw him the next minute hurrying down the street with what she, from their rapidity, called, inappropriately enough, *passi Inglesi.*

He returned with the French doctor whose name he had the most often heard since he had been in Rome, consequently the one most fashionable and busy. An Italian household of the middle class was new to the foreign physician, and when, after his examination of Vincenzo, Colonel de Crillon privately asked him if he supposed they were badly off, he knew as little of the matter as the inquirer. They looked round, and judged that there was no poverty here, deceived by the picturesque air of everything; the frilled sheets, the damask couch, the silver cups for holy water hung over the bed, the paintings in carved frames, and the gay painted ceiling. A native would have perceived directly that the rooms bore traces of past competency and present poverty; but the two foreigners understood none of these indications, and did not even think that the bare brick floors looked uncomfortable. M. de Crillon was not rich, but he paid the doctor's fee, told him to let him know if the children wanted anything, and

gave him his address at Naples, whither he was obliged to go the next day.

"Is it possible they have no one to look after them but that old witch?" said he, looking to a little outer room, where the wrinkled face of old Nanna, her head covered by nothing but rough and scanty grey hair, was bending over a pot set on a morsel of glowing charcoal, which she was exciting by means of a large *ventolaio*, or feather fan, while she murmured to herself something about having foreseen misfortune since she had dreamed of water the night before.

"No one else? Impossible! Such nice-looking children!"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you really think of the boy?"

"I shall be better able to tell to-morrow. My impression is that the spine is injured, and that it is a surgical case."

M. de Crillon returned to the bedside to bid Vincenzo farewell. The boy was lying with closed eyes and brow knit with pain; the face, so blooming and full of life a few hours before, now wan as if with long illness. He opened his eyes as M. de Crillon took his hand and looked compassionately at him, seemed to recall what had happened, and thanked him, looking round for Irene as if to bid her join him. She came to his side, and looked earnestly at the stranger, almost as if asking for pardon.

"Farewell, my dear boy; Dr.——will let me know how you go on," said he, with more cheerfulness than he felt. "Signorina, I have alarmed you twice to-day; what will your recollections of me be?"

Irene coloured with a pretty look of consciousness, held out her hand, and whispered—

"*Addio, signor!*"

The physician made his appearance again next day, and found Vincenzo in less pain, and in a feverish state of excitement about his work at the studio, though unable to sit up. When assured that absolute rest was imperative, he answered by an impatient gesture, and beckoning Irene to approach, whispered—

"Make Nanna get the truth from him; I must know."

Accordingly, when the doctor had written his prescription, and was retiring, the old woman followed him, and asked mysteriously what he thought was amiss with Vincenzo. He seemed slightly reluctant to answer, but at last said—

"I may as well tell you the truth; I can do very little for him, and he had better be under a surgeon. I shall not come again unless you send for me. His back is injured."

"*Santa Vergine!* and when will he be able to work again?"

"I cannot say. If these children are poor, why not let him go to Santo Spirito?"

"The hospital! Better die! The hospital! Let him die of hunger here rather than there! The signor knows nothing of these things. I am *Romana;* I had a relation once in Santo Spirito, and I know what it is. I will starve, I will beg, sooner than the boy shall go to the hospital!"

The fashionable physician had little knowledge of Roman charities, and was inclined to believe the popular prejudice against Santo Spirito to be unfounded. He was provoked, and said, drily—

"Do as you please; but I warn you, the boy is very likely to be a cripple for life."

Thereupon Nanna burst into a perfect howl of grief, mingled with uproarious exclamations and adjurations, which entirely drowned the doctor's emphatic remonstrance. Every word reached Irene and Vincenzo in the inner room, including her last—

"Then may Madonna take us to Paradise, for we shall starve before the week's end!"

"You hear, Irene?" said Vincenzo.

"It is not true," was her instinctive reply.

He made no answer, but drew the bedclothes over his face, lying thus for a long while, to the extreme terror of Irene, whose own truly southern nature always sought relief in unrestrained and visible emotion. At last he put out his hand, and drew her wet cheek close to his.

"Don't cry so, my own dearest—I can't bear that. Irene, darling, do you remember our father's last words?"

"God hath never failed them that seek Him," answered Irene, in English.

The words came again and again to her mind as she sat by her brother, while Nanna was gone to the druggist's with the prescription. She thought over her past life, for the most part too happy to be easily recalled, but one event stood out prominently—her mother's death. That one long past sorrow was dearer than all the peaceful pleasant days before and after. Then came recollections of her father's teaching; walks with him on *feste*, when he would describe his own childhood in that England of which his children had so little idea—then she recalled his pride in his hand-

some and talented boy—then a dark vision of the sudden fever that had snatched him away, leaving them little but his memory as a legacy. The brother and sister were then eighteen and sixteen. A few months had passed since they had been left orphans, and all they had to depend on was Vincenzo's earnings, which, for his age, were very considerable. Friends they had none, except his master, the sculptor Trajano, who had treated him with great kindness and liberality. Vincenzo had acquaintances and companions of his own age and position, but no one to whom he could look in time of trouble. They had been but a short time in their present abode; and the children of a Protestant were necessarily singularly isolated in Rome. Their creed must have been a very undefined one, for Nanna and their mother were devout Roman Catholics, but their father had always taken them with him to the English Church, where, unlike too many of the English artists in Rome, he never failed to attend once at least on a Sunday. It was dear to them for his sake, and all old Nanna's horror of the Protestants could not induce them to discontinue the habit of going there. They felt as if they found their father again there more than in the gorgeous worship of the Church of the mother, who had been dead so long that their affection for her was vague and dreamy, while the memory of the dear father just lost was fresh as the flowers they strewed on his grave in the lonely burial-ground where he was laid. The English Protestant might not lie by his Roman Catholic wife. Had both lived, the different religions must have caused disunion or confusion: it was well that their children had only peace and love to remember.

The girl's meditations were interrupted.

"Irene! how are we to live?" asked Vincenzo, abruptly. "You know no more than I do. Well, Nanna must go to tell Signor Trajano not to expect me at present."

"Yes," she answered, in a tone of forced cheerfulness, like her brother's.

He lay still again for awhile, and she began considering if there were anything she could do to gain money. She did not know much; had she been of a far higher rank she would have known little more. A little arithmetic, reading, writing—let us not forget embroidery and the manufacture of paper flowers—such was the sum of her accomplishments. She had, too, the versatile and ready wit of her countrywomen, and all an Italian's talent for music, but it had never been cultivated; it would bring in no money! Embroidery? Yes, she might sell it; but she knew already several girls who tried to make a few pauls by it, and how sadly few they were. Still, the idea of being able to earn anything at all was cheering, and she awaited Nanna's return with impatience, that she might send her to a workshop. The possibility of going out alone herself never even crossed her mind; independent of the difficulty of leaving Vincenzo by himself, she had never ventured into the street, unaccompanied, in her life; the mere idea would have shocked her. But when Nanna returned, stiff and weary, she could not ask the old woman to go out again. She must wait.

The next day brought Signor Trajano to see Vincenzo, hopeful that his pupil would soon come back; but it was too evident that this was out of the question. He assured him, however, that, come when

he might, he should be welcome, and offered for the present to continue his wages. To this Vincenzo could not agree; it was not just; he might never recover.

"At all events, I may pay you for what you have done to the Flora," said Trajano, laying down several *scudi*, as he went away, to the delight of old Nanna, who bustled out to buy provisions; but Irene saw Vincenzo's hands clasped hard over his face, while he murmured, "My Flora! the last statue I shall ever touch!"

Time passed very slowly over the sick boy, whose mind was ever at work, torturing him by visions of a dread future, or planning what his hand could no more execute. His spirits flagged more and more as daily his strength lessened, and he was aware of the straits to which the little household was reduced. He had supported it; he who was now forced to lie helpless, while starvation advanced slowly, relentlessly upon them. When he saw Irene and Nanna whispering together, he knew, with fevered anxiety, that the last paul was gone, and they were consulting how to find another. The attempt to procure embroidery had failed. There remained the great pawnbroking establishment of the *Monte di Pietà*. What could they pledge there?

"The *acquasantiere*," suggested the old woman, looking towards the cups for holy water, which hung from a wreath of silver lilies above the bed of Vincenzo.

"Or the *conca dell'acqua*," Irene added, more ready to part with the large brazen vessel used to fetch water in, than with the pretty cups; "I don't know how we could spare it though, and we should get so little for it. The best thing we have is mamma's *vezzo*." She opened a drawer, and took from it the row of gold

beads and the boat-shaped earrings which had been all the fortune of her Neapolitan mother.

"*Figlia mia!* thy dowry!"

"We need not think about that, Nanna!"

"Lucia was a mother before your age, child. Sell the *corona!*" exclaimed the old woman, passing the necklace through her wrinkled brown fingers. "It was as dew on parched ground to see her when she wore her own dress, her Sora dress; the white *panno* on her head, and these *pendenti* in her ears, and her beads round her neck. You will never be as handsome as she was, child—never, never; you have nothing of your mother, but her voice."

"And that is of no use, since we cannot sell it," said Irene.

Brought back to the present by this remark, Nanna recollected that they owed money to the butcher, the baker, and the *pizzicarolo*, or greengrocer, and the rent-day was approaching; but as for parting with the *vezzo*, she would not hear of it. She sought her own coral ornaments, and the silver dagger, known as the *spadino*, worn in the hair, all inherited by her as eldest daughter in her family, and which, as she had never married, and had no child to whom to give them, remained in her own possession. Dire indeed must have been the pressure of necessity which induced her to give up the treasured *vezzo!* She wrapped it in a pocket handkerchief, and departed for the Monte. Vincenzo watched the proceedings in silence, presently desiring Irene to give him his tools, and a half-finished frame, which he had been carving into the elegant festoons and berries of the sarsaparilla, the plant that had been the partial cause of his accident. The attempt to carve showed

him how much he was hurt, and the pain it caused him was betrayed by his knit brow and compressed lips; but he defied it for a time, and toiled on, though in his recumbent position he got on very slowly. Irene sat by his bed, knitting; the sounds of singing came faintly up to them from a fountain below, where women were washing clothes, and half unconsciously Irene began, in a low, but exquisitely sweet voice, a verse of a Neapolitan fisherman's song.

"You sing as well as Madame St. Simon," said Vincenzo, naming the prima donna at one of the theatres.

"Ah! how I should like to hear her again! Now I will tell you what I should like better than anything, Vincenzino; to be a prima donna myself, and then we should be rich. When we used to see them act at the Valle, I could hardly help standing up and calling to the actors—'No, this is the way!' For I am certain that often even Madame St. Simon only thought of the audience, and forgot that she was Lucia or Amina. If I were only one of the chorus, I would make myself a part, and not stand like a great dry reed."

"Yes, a reed without even a withered leaf on it, only fit to light a fire!"

"And," continued Irene, glad to see him smile, "when I was *prima donna assoluta* I would have a beautiful name. Every prima donna must have a fine name. I would be the Signorina——"

"No; Mademoiselle——"

"I am Italian! It is only the foreigners who are mademoiselles."

"You may depend upon it they would make you into a foreigner. It is so much grander to have singers from abroad."

"Well," said Irene, reluctantly. "I think it a ridiculous thing, however. What should I be? I suppose I might keep our own name?"

"Yes. Mademoiselle Moore—More—Mori."

"But that is really Italian, Vincenzo."

"Never mind; it could not sound better. Mademoiselle Mori—that is it."

Old Nanna had gone as fast as age and rheumatism would let her to the Monte di Pietà, that resource of those who are in immediate need of money. Anything may be pledged there, from a valuable picture to a pair of shoes; part of the value is given to the owner, and a ticket, by means of which it may afterwards be redeemed; but a small rate of interest must be paid for it monthly, and it must be recovered at the end of a certain time, or it will be sold in one of the auctions that take place from time to time.

Nanna mingled with the stream of people that flowed under the great archway leading into the quadrangle, on each side of which are the vast magazines where all the goods are arranged—a stream consisting of old and young, men, maidens, and matrons, chiefly of a low rank, and all brought thither reluctantly by the same need of money. Nearly all the faces, of whatever age or sex, were worn and anxious, except some few who came not on their own account, but commissioned by others too busy or of too high a rank to choose to appear in person. There was a list of articles to be sold in a few days hung up beside the doorway, and amongst them were some far too valuable to have been pledged by the poor—a ruby necklace, a silver cup, a lace veil. Doubtless there was a history attached to each, a sad one enough, usually. Fresh faces continually

passed in and out, showing how greatly this institution was taken advantage of by the needy; for far from this being the only place in Rome where they could go, the Monte had *succursali*, branches, in each *rione* or district of Rome. A small number of those who entered, parted from the crowd and took a different direction, with looks so elated, and steps so quick, that it was easy to see that they were of the happy few whom some good fortune enabled to recover their possessions. Presently a burst of passionate grief was heard, and a woman came back, sobbing aloud. A murmur of compassion went through the crowd—"*Poverina!* her things have been sold! Ah, shame! ah, the Pagans!"—all sympathizing in a calamity which might befall any one of themselves, if they failed to pay the interest on what they had borrowed. "What did they give you? how much have you got back?"

"A nothing! a folly! a scandal!" she answered, tossing out her hand, in which were a few pauls—part of what her household gods had fetched.

"Ah," responded the others, with indescribable, though suppressed scorn and anger; "see the beautiful charity!"

She went out, passing by a party of English, who were asking the Swiss porter if they might visit the establishment, without perhaps very well knowing what they were to see. The Italians immediately detected the foreign dress and accent, and not very complimentary remarks passed between them, as they came and went, on the English heretics who had come to spy out their poverty. Unheeding or unhearing remarks made in the local dialect, almost incomprehensible to any but a native, and differing even in different parts

of Rome, the foreigners disappeared into the room, where the porter told them that the pictures were kept, probably imagining that they should see a Borghese or Spada gallery instead of such originals and copies as had been pawned.

Time is apparently an article valued by none but foreigners in Rome, and so much was consumed before it came to Nanna's turn to be attended to, that she found the shortening November day had nearly closed when she left the Monte. A sirocco was blowing, the streets were wet as if with rain, and nearly empty, and of the few passengers, some had umbrellas up, others held them furled, as if there were a diversity of opinion as to whether it rained or not, but every Italian had his cloak flung across his mouth, and hurried on his way, anxious to escape from the chilling atmosphere. The air was heavy; darkness had come on before its time; there was a gloomy, disconsolate look everywhere. Old Nanna muttered in disgust as the damp, cold wind made her shiver, and quickened her pace, but coming to the Church of Sant' Agostino, she stopped, pushed aside the heavy mat which hung at the doorway, and entered, signing herself rapidly with holy water, and devoutly kneeling down among the congregation—a remarkably numerous one, considering that the hour was late, and there was no service going on. The scene was one peculiarly Roman. Darkness prevailed in the building, though before each altar in the side aisles burned a small lamp suspended from the roof, and two more shone out with a clear, steady brilliancy, like that of stars, at the further end; but all around was gloom, and the bottom of the church seemed a cavern into which the eye was unable to pierce or follow the figures that now

and then passed into it. But at the lower end was a marble statue of the Virgin holding the Infant Saviour, and above, and around it, were a wreath of lamps whose light illumined it and flashed on the silver hearts, crucifixes, and other countless offerings which incrusted the pillars and the walls—tokens of gratitude from those who believed that their prayers at this shrine had been granted. From some curious effect of light, the form of the Infant Christ could hardly be distinguished, and the illumination brought out the figure of the Virgin alone, and into strong, startling relief. Two tapers, in massive bronze candlesticks, rose at least fourteen feet from the ground, at some distance from the altar. A large congregation of men and women knelt around in profound silence; sometimes a new worshipper came in, or another softly rose, went up to the statue, and kissed or held a child to kiss its feet, before leaving the church. Nanna was one of the last to go; had her prayer been audible, it would have been found to end thus:—"Listen to me, *Madonna mia;* you will not let us starve, for you are our Mother, full of grace, and goodness, and mercy. What mother will let her children starve? Queen of Heaven and Earth, listen to me. Queen of Angels, now you know everything—I have told you all. I am going away, and you must really and truly make the boy well. *Addio*, dear Madonna."

Putting her rosary into her pocket, she went up the low steps leading to the altar, kissed earnestly the Virgin's feet, and dipping a bit of cotton wool into the oil of a small lamp burning close at hand, left the church, happy in the belief that Vincenzo would soon be well, since she had vowed to offer her earrings to the Virgin of Sant' Agostino should he again go to his work, and

had moreover obtained a charm, which must avail if used with faith. Nanna was not the only one who carried home that evening a similar bit of cotton or tow dipped in the holy oil, nor would persons of a much higher rank and education have doubted, for a moment, that its application to an ailing part would have miraculous results. Probably this custom dates from the middle ages, when on certain days the clergy and people went in procession to particular churches, and mass having been sung, an acolyte dipped a piece of tow in the oil of the lamp which burned before the shrine of the saint whose day they had been celebrating, and bore it to the Pope, saying, "To-day the station took place in such a church, and the saint salutes you." A solemn message! The locks of tow were carefully kept to form a pillow, on which the Pontiff's head might rest in his grave.

No such antiquarian speculations troubled old Nanna as she went homewards, her heart much the lighter for the pauls in her pocket, and the entire and childlike confidence that her prayer must be granted, and Vincenzo's recovery be secured. As her knock came to the door which shut in their rooms, Irene was lighting a small lamp, and with true Roman caution she exclaimed, "Who is it?" and came to reconnoitre before she would open. The time had seemed long to her during the old woman's absence: Vincenzo had fallen asleep, and, afraid to rouse him, she had been sitting in the dark with the spaniel's cold nose in her hand. He showed his astonishment at his young master's inactivity as plainly as a human being could have done; and when he stood by the bed, wagging his tail or giving a short bark, while he fixed his intelligent eyes

on the boy, tears filled Irene's eyes, and Vincenzo had some difficulty in concealing his own.

"Oh, Nanna! how long you have been! Down, Tevere, be quiet!"

"Eh! eh! daughter, go yourself next time. Keep tranquil, evil dog! you would see what is in my apron, eh? Little enough I got for all I took, but we can live for a while, and then Madonna help us! How is my boy? See what I have brought home, sun of my soul! Here is a fine supper for us all," said the old woman, as gay as a child, now that want was staved off for a time, and producing her handkerchief, full of yellow-brown shells, *telline*, as she, unlearned in conchology, would have called them, but more properly *donaces*, a favourite dish, cooked or uncooked, in Rome. "*Scansarti!* begone, dog! And here is something besides, something to make my darling boy well; and I have promised Madonna that he will never go to the English church again, now that he has felt her displeasure attends it."

Irene looked grave, and wondered that Vincenzo made no protest, unless a hasty movement might be so called. A moment afterwards it came upon her, with a sort of stab of pain, that he had not spirits to combat Nanna's prejudices, or to laugh at them as usual, because he believed that never again should he have the power of walking to the English church.

CHAPTER II.

I have been told the virtuous must be happy,
And have believed it true: tell me, my friend,
What shall disturb the virtuous?
Poverty!

SOUTHEY.

ONE thing after another was sold; even Irene's *vezzo* and the guitar on which she used to play with untaught skill, down to their little lamp, and many other things which it was hard to spare, and which fetched so little at the Monte that Nanna did not scruple to say it was "an infamy, an iniquity;" and in truth the institution is not at the present day exactly what was contemplated by the founder, St. Bernardino of Siena. Nanna urged the advisability of taking the *vezzo* to some one who might be induced to advance a more equitable sum on it, with the promise that it should speedily be redeemed; and she was disconcerted by Irene's objecting that this was dishonourable, since they had no chance of recovering it. Such a pitch of morality was beyond the old woman, who, though thoroughly faithful to the orphans, had little notion of truth and honesty towards others, and was only a degree above those of her compatriots who pick their neighbour's pockets while reciting their prayers devoutly in a church.

One thing went, then another; the picture of Santa Lucia, their mother's patron saint; sketches by their father, in the beautiful carved frames which Vincenzo had delighted to make for them; at last even the portrait of their mother, their dearest possession; and as they could not pay the trifling interest due to the Monte for the money lent on these things, they knew that all

would speedily be sold in the auction room in the Piazza dei Pellegrini, where so many household treasures are examined by careless hands, and sold for prices far below their real value.

Each day something went, till at last there was nothing more to sell. Nothing! and Vincenzo grew no better. He could now sit up a little and use his hands, but that was all, and hunger was close at hand, and an execution for rent impending. Hunger—actual hunger—not a morsel of bread in the cupboard; not one handful more maize to make another dish of polenta. Daily Irene had grown whiter and thinner as food became scarcer, and what were her brother's feelings, as from his sick bed he saw it, and knew that nothing stood between them and starvation. At any time, a boy must have felt as a trial almost unbearable this sudden change from buoyant health and constant occupation, which made a leisure hour or an occasional festa so delightful, to ceaseless pain and forced idleness. Vincenzo had no books, and, moreover, had not been brought up to care for reading; the future had been his constant dream, and he had no store of recollections to fall back upon; all day long he lay in his bed with nothing to think of but their desperate condition. The boy had a gallant spirit, and from the day that Irene had been trusted to his care by their dying father, to his elastic youth he had added a man's earnestness. How happy and proud he had been in the knowledge that he supported the whole household! And now it was all over. At least he would not complain, and as long as any one saw him, he maintained some cheerfulness, and if Irene had not one night fancied that she heard a sound in his room and crept to the door to

listen, without waking Nanna, she would never have known how dire was the struggle to keep up that composure by day. She stood for a little while unperceived, watching his face, so white in the moonlight; she heard broken, despairing, imploring prayers, till her heart was ready to break; and if she had followed her impulse she would have rushed to his bedside and sobbed away her wretchedness there; but Irene was no longer the mere child she had been but a few weeks before; she, too, had been taking lessons in self-control. Many times already she had forced out a cheerful answer, and tried to forget that she was hungry, and now she knew that this anguish was meant for no mortal eye, and would not betray that she had seen it. In the morning, she asked Vincenzo rather timidly how he was. He answered, "I'll tell you how many noises I counted last night:—First, at midnight, some one was wanted on the sixth story of the house over the way, so there were six knocks. They must sleep soundly up there, for they did not wake till the third summons, that made eighteen thumps. Then came a party very jolly indeed, with a mandolin, all singing; some one opened a window to listen, so, of course, they began to bark. I never can understand why they do that."

"Modesty! I suppose they mean to say that they are not worth listening to—mere dogs. However, they howled rather nicely, so I was sorry when they turned the corner. Then the bells of Sta. Maria Santissima rang for the midnight *funzione;* then S. Nicolo struck up just as I was going to sleep; and then came daylight, and the soldiers and their drums; before that, I ought to have counted the firing from S. Angelo for

the *festa*, and the man who cries chicory; and so I did not get much sleep to be sure."

Not a word of any other reason, and Irene asked no more.

It being a *festa*, Nanna, of course, went to mass, and returned so radiant with delight that Irene eagerly asked what had happened. Nanna mysteriously produced something which she had held in her hand under her apron, and Irene beheld a bracelet, formed of bosses of garnets, which from its workmanship, she had no difficulty in recognising as Florentine. In answer to her eager questions, Nanna said that she had picked it up in a church—without, however, mentioning that she had seen it fall from the arm of an English lady. She was going to take it to the Ghetto, and see what the Jews would give for it.

"But," said Irene, doubtfully, "it—it is not ours; it will be advertised."

"Let them advertise, if they like, and let us live, silly child!"

"What is it?" asked Vincenzo.

Irene explained, though Nanna made a sign to her not to do so.

"Of course it is not ours; go to the libraries in the Piazza di Spagna, and say you have found a bracelet; don't keep it here to tempt us," said Vincenzo, more sharply than they had ever known him speak before. Nanna grumblingly obeyed, comforted a little by the hope of a reward, and on reaching the library, she found the ladies whom she had seen in the church, talking to the bookseller about their loss. He advised an advertisement, but gave them small hopes of recovering it. One of the party said she believed she

had heard it drop; she looked, but there was nothing to be seen, and, if she were right, an old woman, who was kneeling near, must—Just at this point Nanna appeared; the sight of her caused a sensation, but the bracelet was speedily restored to its owner, who was too well satisfied to ask any questions, and Nanna had no cause to be dissatisfied with English liberality.

Signor Trajano came again and left money, which made Irene and Nanna so happy for several days, that they wondered at Vincenzo's increased depression, for they did not see that he felt how they were living on alms; and, besides, anything that reminded him of the studio was acutely painful. But, in a short time, these chance supplies were exhausted, and they literally did not know whither to turn for a meal. They rose up hungry in the morning, and went to bed at night almost without having broken their fast, to wake to the same state of things. All their neighbours were very poor; of the seven or eight families living in the same house with them, most lived from hand to mouth, sleeping on straw, and crowded into one or two rooms. None had the power, if they had the will, to help them.

Neither of the three complained nor spoke of what was to be done. Old Nanna had tried every resource, even to begging, and all in vain. They and starvation kept house together. One afternoon Irene went down to the fountain to fetch some water, and cry unseen; returning with her noiseless step, she saw old Nanna crouched in a corner, her distaff, with no flax on it, lying on the ground beside her; Vincenzo lying idle, the clay that he had begged Signor Trajano to send him, left untouched beside him; it was a picture of

blank hopelessness. Just then the spaniel, which had followed Irene down, pattered back into the room, looked into his empty food dish, went up to his master's bedside, and wagged his tail. Nothing could have spoken plainer.

"Poor fellow!" said Vincenzo, in English, that Nanna might not understand, "are you hungry? So am I."

The dog whined, and put his fore paws on the bed, trying to lick his face. Nanna never looked up, she was sunk into apathetic despair; but Irene heard only too plainly, and in a passion of anguish she drew her shawl over her head, and ran down-stairs out into the street, all her fears and prejudices forgotten in the kind of despairing hope that she might find some help. Nanna had failed at the workshop, but perhaps they might have pity on a girl who said she was starving. She hurried on, hardly feeling or seeing the passengers whom she ran against or who pushed her off the crowded side paths, till she came to the workshop, where there were more customers than the owners could easily attend to. No one had a minute to spare for her—her entreaties were hardly listened to; repulsed, she found herself outside the shop again, her last hope gone. She leaned against the wall, too faint and heart-sick to move a step further, and, half unconsciously, watched the passers-by, who brushed impatiently against the object in their way, without stopping to regard it. An old crone with the never-failing *scaldino* (or basket of charcoal to keep the hands warm) stood near; Irene heard her mutter, "Fifteen pauls; only fifteen pauls to- day!" then, in a prolonged whine, "Give me some little alms, that the Madonna may give you health!

Do not abandon me, signor—madama! I am so hungry! Oh! hard hearts!" with a snarl, as they passed on, unheeding. A gentleman gave her some small coin, and Irene involuntarily held out her hand too. He hurried on, saying to his companion, "These beggars are the pest of the place; all the same! I wonder how many scudi I should have spent if I had given a bajocco to every one who has begged since I came out!"

The lady on his arm laughed, and they disappeared in the never-ending stream of promenaders, chiefly gay sight-seers, rejoicing in the sunshine. No one had a glance for the desolate girl, who stood just where she had leant when first sent out of the shop. A child was the only one to have compassion—a little fellow of perhaps four years old, who came running out of the confectioner's shop next door, preceding his mother, a bun in his fat hand. He was a perfect picture of a rosy, well-dressed English child, in his black velvet pelisse, and a little pink handkerchief round his throat. He was chattering with all his might, till he looked up and met the wistful black eyes of Irene. She did not beg this time; she only looked at the bun as if famished, and the little one suddenly put it into her hand and scrambled into a carriage after his mother; Irene saw his rosy laughing face pressed against the glass to watch her as they drove away. She had clutched the bun fast—what a mouthful it was to a girl who had eaten nothing that day! but she had scarcely devoured it, when the thought of Nanna and Vincenzo at home flashed upon her. She had forgotten them! Poor child, her hungry impulse seemed actual sin; she had eaten the bun while her sick brother was

starving at home! Miserable as she felt, she had recovered a little energy—she turned homewards, but had to go back with no comfort for those she should find there! And yet she had trusted—she had believed long, for time in some circumstances cannot be counted by days and hours; she had believed so firmly that help would be sent them! had that promise indeed failed? and if so, where was she to turn for help? Three o'clock was past and the churches were again open: she entered the first she came to, and hiding her face in her hands, wept so passionately that she did not perceive that one of a party of English, who were examining the pictures and statues, had approached her, and laying a hand on her shoulder, asked gently what had happened. Startled by the touch, Irene hastily lifted a face so white and so thin that the lady started, looked doubtful, and said, "Have I not seen you in the English church?"

"I go there."

"Then what right have you here, my child?"

"It is God's house; I have the right of every one who is unhappy," Irene answered.

"And why are you unhappy? Have you been ill?"

In reply Irene told her story, ending with, "Oh, signora, it was so wicked of me to eat that bun! I forgot Vincenzo! I did indeed!"

"Will you take me to see Vincenzo?"

A sudden flash of delight from Irene's black eyes was the answer, and her companion returned to her party and spoke a few words, which were received with smiling incredulity. No one objected, however, and she accompanied Irene, stopping at the first bread-shop they came to that Irene might have something

more substantial than a bun, and convey a supply to her home. In all the ecstasy of renewed hope, she hurried her new friend along, through streets quite unknown to the latter, till they reached their destination, a square, which, to judge by the number of old palaces, must once have been a favourite quarter of the nobility, but now each floor was divided into many apartments and let to the poor; rags hung to dry from many windows, and hides, scenting the whole air, were suspended before one stately mansion; there was a general look of poverty and dirt everywhere. Into one of these palaces Irene introduced her companion, running lightly before her up flight after flight of stairs. Nanna came slowly to the door in answer to her impatient knock; she had not even perceived her absence, Nanna who usually watched over her like a dragon!

"Oh, Nanna!" began Irene, breathlessly, "this lady has come to see us, and she has brought us all this! She carried it all down the Corso, and did not mind! and I must give Vincenzo some dinner immediately —see!"

"*Per Bacco!*" exclaimed Nanna, taking possession of the visitor's hand and kissing it, as she conducted her into the next room, where Irene was explaining eagerly to Vincenzo. The lady advanced and took the hand, thin and fair as an invalid girl's, which he held out to her, examining her face attentively, then smiling and saying, "Mrs. Dalzell."

"How do you know my name?" she asked, much surprised.

"I worked in Signor Trajano's studio, and he had just begun to model your bust before my accident."

"I knew I had seen you somewhere before. I

noticed you in the English church," she answered; "I have long wished to meet with you; fortune favoured me to-day."

While Irene insisted on Vincenzo's eating immediately, Mrs. Dalzell looked round and asked questions, and felt very sure that here at least she was safe from the imposition which her friends had predicted. If M. De Crillon had seen the room now, he would have had no doubt as to the poverty of its owners, and when Mrs. Dalzell looked at the faces of the brother and sister, she felt that she had come but just in time. Old Nanna saw her compassionate look, and exclaimed, "If the signora had but seen the boy before he fell ill! he was an Adonis, an Apollo! ah!" (shaking her hand at him) "and a demon too, a tempest, wicked boy! He would rush upstairs shaking the whole house! *Santa Vergine!*" as she caught a clearer view of Mrs. Dalzell than she had yet done, and she summoned Irene aside. The girl speedily returned, saying with animation, "Nanna says you were with the lady whose bracelet she found!"

Mrs. Dalzell's sensation was far from pleasant, as she recalled her conviction that the bracelet had rather been stolen than found, but she was convinced that the orphans were unconnected with the affair. However, she was glad when Irene added, "We were so poor that day that Nanna wanted to sell it, but Vincenzo would not let her."

"I am glad of it; I know that my friend values it particularly. Have you really no one to take care of you but this old woman? What hands for a girl to be in!" she added, mentally.

"No, no one else. Tevere, do you really want

some more! Oh fie!—No one else, signora, but she is so kind and true to us. She is a pearl, an oriental pearl of probity," said Irene, whose English, though fluent, was apt to be a translation from the more poetical Italian. The figure of speech, especially so applied, made Mrs. Dalzell smile, and she thought that the truth and probity probably began and ended at home.

"I never knew the value of my dinner so well before, signora," said Vincenzo, sinking comfortably back on the pillows, which Irene had re-arranged for him.

"We had almost forgotten what dinner was," she added.

"Is it possible you could find no assistance?" asked Mrs. Dalzell; "I thought, the Roman charities were magnificent."

"They are not for such as we; they are to keep quiet the *bassa gente*—the populace," replied Irene, with grave simplicity.

"And not for Protestants," added Vincenzo.

"Ah, no. And you have no friends, though you have lived here so long?"

"None who can help us. My father had few; he lived for his art."

"I should like to be considered as your friend, then," said Mrs. Dalzell, rising to take leave. "Signor Trajano and I must have a little talk together. Give me your doctor's address again, and don't forget mine. I shall come to pay you another visit in a day or two." She took Vincenzo's hand in hers as she spoke, and looked kindly at his face, so much altered from what she remembered it, that it was hard to believe he was the fine handsome boy she had admired on the Pincian Hill.

"I would thank you if I could, signora," he answered, in hurried, faltering tones. "Oh, signora, we were starving—*she* was starving"—looking at Irene; "that was worst; I was beginning to wish I were dead, sooner than see it."

"Oh, Vincenzo!" said Irene, with a crimson blush.

"I shall leave you to make your confessions to him," said Mrs. Dalzell: "but, meanwhile, will you come here and say something for me to Nanna?"

She gave Nanna what she judged would be sufficient for their present wants, and departed before the old woman had half expressed her voluble gratitude.

CHAPTER III.

What sorrow was, thou bad'st her know,
And from her own, she learnt to melt at others' woe.

GRAY.

MRS. DALZELL was a widow, still young, and rich. She had come to Rome for the first time in her life, and friends, who had known her in former days, expected her to be enthusiastically delighted with its wonders; but, hitherto, she had gone through the routine of sight-seeing with a somewhat forced interest, and the first thing that really roused her was the history of the orphans. Her friends were too glad to see her begin to shake off the depression caused by heavy trials, to wish to interfere, though they took it for granted that she would be imposed on. She set about her task in a very business-like manner; she saw the physician who had first attended Vincenzo, and sent a good surgeon to see him; and she had a great deal of conversation with Signor Trajano about him;

but she found it so difficult to devise any schemes for the permanent benefit of the orphans, that she returned to their house to see whether they had any ideas on the subject themselves. Cheerfulness and comfort had revisited the rooms, and Irene and Vincenzo met her greeting with bright looks. She had calculated her gift on an English scale, ignorant of how far Italians can make a little money go, and she assuredly had not expected that almost the first use of her bounty would be the recovery of Irene's gold earrings. Irene exhibited them to her with delight, relating how they had been first pledged, and then sold; but how Nanna had discovered who had bought them and got them back. Unaware of the extreme value attached to the *vezzo*, Mrs. Dalzell was inclined to regard this as mere foreign love of finery, and determined, for the future, not to trust Nanna with more money than necessary. She sat down by Vincenzo, who was cheered by having been allowed to leave his bed and be carried to a sofa. He was carving a bunch of cyclamen leaves and flowers, with a delicacy and grace that surprised her, and Irene told of the beautiful frames that he had made for their father's pictures—all sold now. She stopped, seeing the flush that rose to her brother's face at the recollection of those lost treasures, so inestimable to the orphans. Mrs. Dalzell described to him a room which she had once seen decorated by a celebrated carver with groups of birds, musical instruments, and flowers, in exactly the same style as Vincenzo's, and asked him if he did not think he might gain a livelihood in this way.

"Oh, signora! To get my own living again! not to live on charity—to be even thus much of an

artist! You little know what happiness you have given me!"

"I think I know several people who would employ you," she replied, amused at the un-English vehemence of his gratitude; the invalid's face seemed suddenly to have recovered its bloom; the dark eyes sparkled; Vincenzo looked for a time transformed into his own self. "Finish what you are about, and then let me have it. And what can Irene do?"

"Irene wishes to be a prima donna," answered Vincenzo, smiling.

"A prima donna!"

"I could act, I think," said Irene herself; and Mrs. Dalzell, watching her expressive and graceful movements and looks, felt that she was right.

"And she can sing," added Vincenzo.

"Ah! she must let me hear her."

"Sing something, *carina*," said Vincenzo; "what a pity your *chitarra* is gone!"

"What is that? I thought the mandolin was the Roman instrument."

"That is a man's instrument. Oh, signora, at Easter, you should gó to the Villa Borghese, on the river side, to see the people dancing the salterello and playing with castanets and the mandolin—it is beautiful!"

"But now I want to hear you."

With a glance towards Vincenzo, Irene began a popular canzone, acting the expression just enough to show how much dramatic power she possessed, and soon so entirely forgetting all but her song, that her tones, at first faltering, became steady and full, and proved how fine the voice would some day be. Vin-

cenzo watched the face of Mrs. Dalzell anxiously, and thought he read surprise and admiration. He was much disappointed when, as the song ceased, she quietly remarked, "You have a very nice voice, but I should be sorry you should turn it to account on the stage. You can have no idea of the temptations and trials of such a life, or of its hard work either."

Irene made no answer. Mrs. Dalzell sat thinking, and Vincenzo said, "She very nearly went to Madame St. Simon the other day, to beg her to teach her, only her courage failed."

"It will not do so again, Vincenzo."

"You wish it so much?" said Mrs. Dalzell; "what do you know about it?"

Irene looked at her brother, who replied for her, "I do not know whether she be quite in earnest, and I believe it is not acting that she cares so much for; she would like to be a prima donna at the opera."

"But I am in earnest, Vincenzo," said Irene, emphatically.

It was not the life that Mrs. Dalzell would have chosen for her *protégée*. She avoided a definite answer, and left them, glad that Vincenzo's plans were more sober, and recommending him to finish his carving as soon as he could. He, delighted to be employed again, and employed, too, on a kind of sculpture where his imagination had play, was happier than he had been since his accident, and seemed insensible to the fatigue which even this slight labour caused him. Irene, on the contrary, was moody, and said, after a long silence, "I believe I could be a great cantatrice; I do not see what right this English lady has to interfere."

"Interfere!" said Vincenzo, looking up in surprise.

"Yes, interfere. I shall ask Madame St. Simon to help me, not this Signora Dalzell; and if I succeed I can repay her; many learn on that condition."

"Child! child!" broke in Nanna, "are you crazy? what are you saying? This rich English lady can make us live in Asiatic luxury; her purse drops gold, and you had not the sense to tell her to-day that we have not got the *corona* back; did you not hear what I said to you?"

"She has done too much already," said Vincenzo; "help of this kind I can take," pointing to his carving; "but we are not beggars."

"No, and because I do not wish to live on her money or any one else's, I want to learn singing," said Irene, with cheeks so flushed and eyes so tearful, that Vincenzo found the matter was more serious than he had imagined, and asked gravely how long she had had this fancy.

"You might remember that I always wished it, Vincenzo, long before—before our troubles, but I never thought it was possible till that day when you said I sang as well as Madame St. Simon."

"It was an unlucky day when I said it. Think how actresses are regarded."

"If I were prima donna, my profession should be esteemed for my sake; I would make it the most honourable in Rome. Vincenzo, cannot you understand that as you—as men, I mean—wish for fame, so women may? I think, if one has the power to do anything, one must and one ought to do it," said Irene, who seemed in the last few weeks to have grown from a child into a woman; the ambition that had lain dormant in her heart was awake, and no spell known

to prudent brother or friend could lull it to sleep again. The bird had found out the use of its wings; its nest would soon seem only a prison. Vincenzo had had visions of his own, he comprehended.

"I understand, Irene," he said, unconsciously speaking very mournfully; "I know that when one has a vocation and cannot follow it, one must feel like a swallow which cannot migrate; but how is it that you care so suddenly and so much about this?"

"Because till lately I had—I had—I cannot tell you."

"Perhaps till lately you thought so much of fame for me that you did not want it for yourself!"

Irene turned away hastily; she could not bear to realize what nevertheless she knew full well, that Vincenzo's chance of fame was gone for ever. She came back caressingly to his side, almost as if asking pardon. "I could not help thinking about it; I was so glad of any pleasant fancies, and I thought so often to myself what Madame St. Simon would say, and what I would sing to prove to her that I had a voice, that at last I almost believed it had all come to pass; but the last few days, when we were so hungry, I had not courage; I did not seem to care for anything."

"Poor little one," said Vincenzo, affectionately. And she, taking courage, nestled close to him, whispering,

"But don't say you will never be well again; you are better already, and if, as the doctor says, you could go into the country and have baths——"

"Don't talk about it, Irene," said Vincenzo, unaware that he was speaking sharply; "I would rather think about you and your singing."

"I care more for you than even for that," she answered.

Vincenzo had a Roman's love of music and a Roman's delight in the theatre, and the idea of letting Irene follow her wishes grew less unwelcome as he considered them. After all, he was but a boy, and the dream of renown for her, if not for himself, was very pleasant. He pictured to himself her success, and mentally compared her voice with those of the few public singers of note whom he had heard, and it did not suffer by comparison. She had almost won him over to her side before night, and Nanna was vehemently in her favour. Vincenzo had heard enough of theatres to make him hesitate a little, but even this anxiety was a relief to his mind, wearied with dwelling on one subject. His dreams were an odd mixture of cyclamens, musical instruments, hisses and applause, and even the famous Book of Visions could hardly have explained one wherein he beheld Irene playing on the tool which Italian sculptors call a violin, in the Teatro Regio. Mrs. Dalzell was much worried by the turn affairs had taken. She had intended to help the orphans in some sober unobtrusive way, and had little expected to find a musical genius upon her hands. She knew too well how much entertained most of her English friends would be, to feel inclined to confide her perplexities to them; in their stead, she sought an old acquaintance whom she had known slightly years before in London, and had found again living in Rome, a Madame Marriotti, by birth a Spaniard, once the idol of the musical world, and who still in advanced age preserved her love of music, with the execution and taste, and even

something of the voice, that had made her pre-eminent among the professional musicians of her day.

Mrs. Dalzell wanted to find her alone and disengaged, and therefore sent a note, announcing that she was coming to spend the evening with her, whenever she had no reception. She walked alone to Madame Marriotti's abode, her own being close by, and her habits very independent. She had yet to learn Italian ways, and was greatly surprised, on reaching the archway leading into the house, to find herself in total darkness, and hear a trampling as if oxen or horses were close by. Remembering that the staircase faced a stable, she hastily retreated into the street, where at least there was such light as could be obtained from one dim oil-lamp at the far end of it, and another burning under a picture of the Virgin, fastened on the wall. When all was quiet, she ventured in again, and, with some trepidation, felt her way up two steep flights of stairs, happily, at last, chancing to lay her hand on a string, which caused a bell somewhere to ring. A voice, up aloft, exclaimed, "*Chi è?*" and the heavy door at the head of the stairs was opened a little way. Mrs. Dalzell profited by the ray of light that shone through the crack, and soon made her way to Madame Marriotti's rooms. A quick, clear voice from within answered, "*Passi!*" to her knock, and entering, she found Madame Marriotti rummaging papers in a cabinet, with a fur cloak wrapped round her, and a little red *fazzoletto* on her head. She turned round to look at her visitor, exhibiting a small dark face, with vivid black eyes and jet-black crisped hair, scarcely streaked with grey; a face which she herself always

considered ugly, but which was capable of such varying and brilliant expression, that it was worth all imaginable beauty of colouring. Her figure was of fairy proportions, and still as light and active as a girl's, though little could be seen of it in her manifold wraps, and neither it nor her countenance owed anything to her costume, which, to say the least, was singular; and altogether a more original little creature than the celebrated cantatrice would have been hard to find. She ceased hunting through her papers for a moment, to shake hands with Mrs. Dalzell, and stir the wood fire, where an earthen pot was boiling, set on an iron tripod, contrasting oddly with the size and handsome furniture of the apartment.

"Ah, so you have come," said she, absently, as if she had not well mastered the idea that Mrs. Dalzell was present. "I was thinking of you this—ah, by the bye, you sent me a note. I cannot think where this letter is," she said, returning to the cabinet, and soliloquizing in short sentences while she rustled the papers.

Mrs. Dalzell waited with exemplary patience till the missing one was found, and Madame Marriotti came voluntarily to sit beside her and talk. Then she began telling her business, growing more eager as she proceeded, and looking at Madame Marriotti as she ended, to see what effect she had produced.

"Ah—yes—" was the reply, in a preoccupied manner; "it is a curious story. I dare say you are right."

"My dear madame, have you heard a word of what I said?"

"Oh, yes, I heard it," was the answer, in exactly

the same dreamy tone; then all at once wakening up to present things, she asked very sharply, "What did you say?"

In short, her mind had been absent, and Mrs. Dalzell's story had reached her ear, but not her brain, and had to be told all over again. She listened this time with increasing surprise and disdain.

"A *cantatrice!* you are dreaming! I dare say the girl has a pretty voice; every Roman can sing; they are all musical; if you passed any café to-night where there was music, you might have seen a crowd outside the door listening, and every one of that crowd could have joined in the airs played; that is a very different thing from having a talent for the stage. Make a *Maestra Pia* of the girl, if you don't know what to do with her; but don't turn her head with talking of the theatre."

"I am sure I am most guiltless of wishing her to be an actress," said Mrs. Dalzell, half laughing; "and I have not an idea what a *Maestra Pia* is."

"Don't you know? The *Maestre Pie* have three great houses of education here for the middle class, and besides some of them hold free schools in every parish in the Papal States; they don't go very deep, you know, so nobody is afraid of them; but we don't love education overmuch here. They take no perpetual vows, but there is some ceremony when they are admitted."

Mrs. Dalzell laughed outright this time. "I don't think that would do at all, and besides, Irene cannot leave her brother. I assure you her voice it not a common one, and if you had seen her graceful gestures as she told me her story——"

"All that may be very true, especially if she has Neapolitan blood in her—have you been at Naples? No?—well, they converse there more by looks and gestures than by words—it is not proved that she has the slightest talent for the stage."

"Her wish is so strong, however, that she was near applying to Madame St. Simon."

"That settles it at once. That woman! I do assure you, my dear—" Madame Marriotti started up in her energy—"I do assure you it makes me perfectly ill to hear her. A vain, heartless coquette, without a grain of sentiment—nothing but a flexible voice, with which she can do wonderful things I daresay; I hear every one say so except the Abate Grossi, the only man who knows what music is—real old music; he keeps up the traditions of the old ways, and hates this new school of macaws, just as I do. No. If this girl admires Madame St. Simon, that is enough."

"I wish you would hear her, at all events."

"Where do they live?"

"It is near. You know the church of St. Andrea della Valle—the famous church which every one goes to see."

"No."

"Not, my dear madame? impossible!"

"No," repeated the old lady, very incredulous of its existence.

"Well," said Mrs. Dalzell, resignedly, knowing that Madame Marriotti might have seen it fifty times without being conscious of its existence, unless something particular brought the fact home to her mind, "it does not matter much; I could not ask you to go there, but should you object to my bringing her here,

without, of course, pledging you in any way? I really should be thankful to put this fancy out of her head, and from your decision there could be no appeal."

"You may bring her here if you like, but I cannot promise to admire her singing, out of politeness. I know exactly the kind of thing it will be."

"Very well, only be so kind as to hear her sing once; then we can settle about it," said Mrs. Dalzell; and Madame Marriotti began to talk of some matter uppermost in her mind, and entirely forgot the first part of the conversation.

Mrs. Dalzell found that friends had arranged plans for her and themselves, which occupied the whole of the next day; and pictures, churches, ruins, and views, left no room in her mind for her *protégés*. Returning to her lodgings at night, weary, excited, and feeling that she had seen an immense variety of things which she could not clearly recall, a more living interest was brought back by the sight of Vincenzo's carving, which had arrived in her absence. Minute inspection only made her better pleased with it, and she placed it in her drawing-room, intending to become its purchaser; but a friend called the next day, and at once declared it must be his—it would exactly suit a painting which he had bought—where had she met with it? She told its history, and gave Vincenzo's address, with strong hopes that other orders would follow, and she could not resist taking him the good news at once. Irene met her with such cheerful looks that she smiled, and asked if she had forgiven her for opposing her wishes. Irene blushed and looked at Vincenzo, who answered, smiling, "She expects that you have brought her good news."

"How, could she guess anything about it?"

"Oh, you have, signora!" cried Irene, with great animation; "I knew you would, for I had a good dream last night!"

"It may be only my frame; I think that is enough good luck for to-day!" said Vincenzo.

"A dream, my dear child? What did you dream about?" said Mrs. Dalzell.

"I dreamed of *farina*," replied Irene, seriously; but, perceiving that her visitor did not comprehend, she added, "You know, that always means good fortune. I did not know what it would be; but as soon as I saw you from the window, I was sure that you were bringing me good news about my singing."

"*Farina?*" repeated Mrs. Dalzell.

"What bread is made of, signora. Do you not call it thus?"

"Flour," added Vincenzo.

"My dear, do you really mean that you believe in dreams?"

"Oh, yes, every one does. Nanna can tell what nearly every dream means. Before Vincenzo's accident she dreamed of water—that means tears; and she was so unhappy all that Sunday, knowing that some misfortune would happen, and, you know, it did; and afterwards, she and I both dreamed we were in the street in our night-dresses, and that means poverty. You see that, certainly, was true, for we were almost starving when you came."

"And do you believe in dreams too?" asked Mrs. Dalzell of Vincenzo.

"No, not I; but we are obliged to believe more

wonderful things still in this place," he answered, with a smile of contempt.

Irene interrupted hastily — "Now, don't laugh, Vincenzo; it will bring ill luck. Do they not believe in dreams in England, signora!"

"How much did papa believe in them?" inquired Vincenzo.

"Oh, but papa was—was—was—perhaps Protestants do not believe in such things?"

"Well-educated people," began Mrs. Dalzell, stopping, because, as the hour of noon was announced by the churches, Irene stood up, Nanna crossed herself, and Vincenzo, too, assumed a serious attitude. After a few moments Nanna took up her knitting again; Irene sat down; and Vincenzo, seeing their visitor's look of perplexity, said, "The *Angelus*; at noon every one repeats it. Did you never notice men taking off their hats in the street when it is noon?"

"But I thought you were Protestants."

"We are, but mamma taught us to say the *Angelus;* she thought one thing right, and papa another. I believe as he did, but Nanna has taught Irene all sorts of nonsense."

"Oh, Vincenzo!"

"Well, really, I cannot accept the history of Sta. Filomena on the same ground as I do St. Paul's; and Nanna knows much more about that Sta. Filomena than she does of the Apostles. Really one is told to believe so much that one is ready to believe nothing."

Mrs. Dalzell found that from being children of a Protestant, the brother and sister had never had the advantage of such education as otherwise would have come within their reach in Rome; they had not attended

any of the classes or catechizings to which Roman Catholic children are summoned. They had never been to any kind of school, and Irene had been almost entirely left to Nanna's care. English both she and Vincenzo spoke easily, but read with difficulty. Mrs. Dalzell offered books to the latter, and would not seem to see that he received the proposal gratefully, but not eagerly. She took Irene away with her, without fully informing her how important was the impending interview with Madame Marriotti, but telling her enough of the *cantatrice* to inspire a respect for her judgment. Irene had never heard of her. Madame Marriotti's public days were past before Irene ever saw the inside of a theatre, but when she heard that the lady had been a prima donna in London, her awe and respect were boundless. Her own wildest dreams had never reached such a height; she believed that nothing but diamonds and rubies were showered on public singers in that capital of golden streets!

Madame Marriotti had never thought again of the affair, and was in a not infrequent mood of nervous irritability, which augured ill for a candid judgment. Mrs. Dalzell regretted that she had brought Irene, and was growing very nervous herself. To cut matters short she took up a heap of popular songs and asked Irene if she knew any of them. The girl withdrew her earnest glance from Madame Marriotti for the first time since she entered, and pointed out a favourite popular air.

"Well, let us hear whether you can sing it," said Madame Marriotti, reluctantly, but going to her piano and striking the first notes. Irene came to her side and obeyed. Mrs. Dalzell watched, with a half smile, her

friend's start of surprise and the deep attention with which she listened.

"Can you sing this?" she asked, without any comment, as Irene paused. "You don't know it? Oh, yes, you do; listen, La, la, la, la,"—humming the first bars. Finding that her young visitor really did not know it, she made an impatient gesture and sang it herself, playing the accompaniment, looking from time to time at Irene, who listened entranced, and exclaimed in English to Mrs. Dalzell, "But it is a marvel! I never heard any singing like that!"

"Not Madame St. Simon's?"

"Oh, no, no, no, this is quite different; this is beautiful—most beautiful!"

Now Madame Marriotti, though she professed not to understand English, had lived quite long enough in London to comprehend every word, and the young girl's admiration pleased her, though she had had the homages of illustrious audiences laid at her feet till she was weary of them.

"Well," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"Well, she will do, I think. I must consider. Here, my dear; you want to be a cantatrice, they tell me; I was one myself, and I know the life: now listen to me."

Thereupon followed a very unflattered picture of the trials of a celebrated singer, at the end of which she waited to hear what Irene had to say.

"But, if the signora had foreseen all this, she would still have been a cantatrice."

"Not for fame or fortune, though. I found both pleasant enough; but if that had been all, half the heart-aches would have far outweighed them."

"I think the music would make amends for all the rest," said Irene.

"If you feel that, you are good for something. There, we have talked enough about it; what are you going to do with the child now, Mrs. Dalzell? I want you to sit a little longer; can't she go home now?"

"If she knows her way."

"Yes, yes, but whom has she to go with? You are not going alone, my dear?"

"Oh, no," answered Irene, shrinking.

"I had not thought of that," began Mrs. Dalzell.

"But you should think about it, my dear. Italian girls can't go scampering about the streets like your English ones; we don't consider it respectable. Can't your servant escort her?"

"Yes, but you must let me go to look for some books for Vincenzo."

When she returned she found Madame Marriotti still at the piano, playing a few bars now and then and meditating. She looked up and said abruptly, "It would be a thousand pities not to cultivate such a voice as that."

"So I think, but the life——"

"Oh, the life, the life; I know many public singers whose names stand as high as any lady's name in England. I myself can witness that it is a life which can be made an honour; if it have great temptations, it has great rewards for those who are real votaries, who look upon it as an art—not a trade. If this child were well trained, brought up properly, if she had some good quiet friends to look after her, she might do admirably; and with the talent she has, she will be a cantatrice

whether you like it or not. It would be a sin to let the St. Simon demoralize her voice."

"If she had but some better teaching than the old nurse's—that woman has a covetous, cunning look which quite frightens me, and I am sure she is not honest; and then the confusion of religious ideas in these children's minds is so painful."

"The girl believing everything, and the boy nothing, I suppose—a common case here."

"No; Vincenzo has more ideas on the subject than I should have expected; but Irene actually professed entire faith in dreams this morning."

She was interrupted by a burst of laughter from Madame Marriotti. "Dreams, my dear? There is not a household which does not possess the *Libro dei Sogni*. What! is it possible you don't know what this is? Not know what that is!" She rang her bell, and, when the maid entered, asked, changing from French into Italian, "Zenaide, I want the dream book." In two minutes, a worn copy was produced, which Madame Marriotti put into Mrs. Dalzell's hands. Opening it at the first page, she found an alphabetical list of words, each with numbers attached. "An index?" she said, inquiringly.

"No, not at all. These numbers relate to the lottery. You probably don't know the enormous importance of the lottery here; there is hardly a house in Rome, I'll answer for it, without this book. You don't understand yet? Now, for instance, I dream I walked into the Via Margutta, and a dog came out of a house and bit my hand. On waking, I look for *dog*, *house*, or *hand*, or all three, and take one or more of the numbers belonging to these words, in the lottery. It need not necessarily be a dream; for example, in one

Carnival there was a frightful accident—some children killed by the *mossa*, the charge of the dragoons, to clear the Corso. Well, there was a perfect run upon the lottery after that; they took Carnival—horse—child—*che so io* —yes, and misfortune and accident too; for, now I come to think about it, misfortune was the only one that drew a prize; No. 32, is it not?"

"But surely this is one of the books that would be prohibited?"

"My dear, if you look, you will see on the contrary it is published with the Censor's approval; we must have some amusement, and, besides, it is profitable to Government—

Il gioco in complesso
È un vizio bestiale,
Ma il lotto in se stesso
Ha non che di morale!

I wonder who the clever rogue is who writes these things; I had those verses on the lottery sent me in manuscript, under the rose, and my friend only got them in the same way: yet one hears them whispered everywhere. But about this girl—I have a great mind to teach her myself; I want something to do sometimes, and I should rather like another pupil."

"She could not have a better teacher!"

"But, then, she knows nothing—she has everything to learn. I should never have patience, and, besides, it is an immense responsibility to be any way answerable for a girl; I would not ask a mother to trust her daughter with me for an hour; she would be having billets doux—falling in love!"

"My idea was," said Mrs. Dalzell, without attempting to persuade her, "to take them away from

their present lodgings, and establish them in some that my landlady had not let."

"Who is your Padrona di Casa? Cecchi? I had forgotten—did not I recommend her to you? I forget so many things now. Then you could keep your eye on this girl."

"She and her brother interest me more than I can tell you, and I might do something for Irene, if I had her constantly with me till June."

"What will your friends say to your spending your time in this way?"

"You know I came to Rome for mental change; it does not matter how I get it, and I don't mean to neglect the sight-seeing; I am only afraid of thinking of nothing else."

"So you stay here till June?" said Madame Marriotti, regarding with affection the face of her friend, which had become saddened as she spoke of mental change.

"Till June. I suppose the heat will drive me out then."

"Oh, I suppose so; as for me, as often as not I stay here all the year round, instead of going to my villa at Florence. I did spend one summer up in the hills, but we got nothing to eat. Well, I shall consider about this child—what is her name?"

"Irene Moore."

"Mura?—what is it? Irene—Irene Mori."

CHAPTER IV.

Whither are you bound?
To the palace, an it like you worship.
Winter's Tale.

THE lodgings that Mrs. Dalzell had taken were on the second floor in an old palace near the Tiber. One common staircase led to corridors with open arcades, looking into a great quadrangle; each story had its corridor, or *loggia*, to use the Italian word, except the highest, which was tenanted by very poor families, or by artists, to whom abundance of light was essential. About eighteen doors on each floor opened into the corridor, and ascend or descend when you would, a face you had never noticed before was sure to be seen. The palace resembled a large hive of bees, with store-houses underground or in the lowest floor, where no one lived, and magazines of wine and wood were kept; and, as in other hives, there were working bees and drones. On the first floor dwelt rich and titled families, on the *mezzanini* professors and teachers; a staircase higher came untitled people; and higher still the artists and the poor, amongst whom might perhaps be counted a poet, who semeed of a joyous temperament, and, whenever he could afford it, gave a supper to his friends; and rumours of a *réunion* of nineteen other poets, whose songs and shouts were heard late into the night, more than once afforded matter for speculation and amusement to the other inhabitants of the palace. It belonged to a noble and very poor family, who, reserving two floors for themselves in a smaller inner quadrangle, let all the rest, and contrived to live on the small portion of rent which was not swallowed up by mortgages and

debts. Mrs. Dalzell had found her way into this un-English quarter under the guidance of Madame Marriotti, and she had far more enjoyment in the novelty, and even the occasional discomforts, than she could have derived from the luxuries of the hotels or lodgings in the streets frequented by her compatriots, where often more English than Italian is to be heard, and all is adapted to English tastes.

The palace looked stately by day, but its aspect gained indescribably by night, when the moon gleamed on the white fronts of the arcades and threw the corridors within into profound shade, in which mysterious staircases yawned blacker still, leading up and down into unknown regions, and lights glimmered here and there from windows grated like those of a prison. As soon as the reign of night began, ghostly noises too were heard—sounds, like heavy blows or distant cannonading, re-echoed through the quadrangle, and the fountain lifted up a voice nearly inaudible by day, and murmured plaintively, doubtless telling of the Anio, from whence its waters came, and of the ancient aqueduct along which they had travelled many a mile. By daylight all the awe and mystery disappeared, and the palace, though always stately, looked cheerful, like a place inhabited by modern, every-day people—a place, moreover, where they might desire to live, when it was seen flooded by sunshine, with white-winged terns wheeling in the blue air above the quadrangle.

Mrs. Dalzell had come abroad with maid and courier; but before she had been a week at Rome, her maid had become so disconsolate in this land, where she could neither understand nor make herself understood, that her mistress was glad to send her home

and manage without her. The landlady, Signora, or, as foreigners usually called her, Madama, Cecchi, spoke enough French to make it a medium of conversation; and when Mrs. Dalzell returned to her lodgings she was admitted by her in person, the padrona having ascertained from a little grated window that it was her lodger who rang. It would not have been easy to find a handsomer specimen of a Roman of the middle class than was this Madama Cecchi, who looked as stately as any duchess as she stood at the door, her black silk dress draping her full and rounded form, her hair rolled back from her brow, and partly shaded by a black lace lappet fastened with gold pins; little enamel and pearl ear-rings in her ears and a mosaic brooch to fasten her lace collar. This was her every-day dress; had she been in full costume, she would probably have worn white, or pale colours, and a gown of some thin material, far less becoming to her, for Roman beauty requires the deep lines and abundant drapery, which, happily, the common people, at least, delight in. Few high-born dames in England could have equalled the natural and stately grace with which she received her lodger, whom she had not seen before that day, and the readiness to hear the something, which Mrs. Dalzell announced she had to say, was expressed in courteous phrases untranslatable, because in any language but their own they would have sounded unnatural.

She preceded Mrs. Dalzell into the anteroom, which had a brick floor and a pile of firewood in one corner; the apartment was by no means splendid, but when, lifting the curtain that hung over the door, they entered the *salotto* or sitting-room, the sunshine which literally

bathed the whole room and called out all the colours on the arched and painted ceiling, sufficiently indicated why Madame Marriotti had recommended it. Sunshine is one of the luxuries for which people come to Rome, and though the winter had been a cold one, Mrs. Dalzell had never yet found it necessary to have a fire in the little open stove until evening. A nosegay of camellias, fringed with the maidenhair fern that grows on every fountain, stood on a round table; another table with a marble top stood in a window which admitted the morning sunshine; a third, also bearing a heavy slab of marble, and too high to be used except as a sideboard, was placed between the two other windows looking towards the west; besides books, it bore two vases of artificial flowers, with a stuffed canary bird and several beetles among them to add to their *vraisemblance;* a heavy clock, highly gilt, was placed in the centre. It being winter, the floor was covered with coarse green and black drugget, or else it, like that of the anteroom, would have been seen to be of brick. This was the sole sign of winter, for there were only thin muslin curtains to the windows; and the green *persiani* outside showed that more precautions against heat than cold were necessary.

Mrs. Dalzell sat down, and told the history of her *protégés*, ending with a proposal to visit the rooms in which she desired to settle them. The prospect of letting them for an indefinite time was welcome to the Roman landlady, who usually could only dispose of them for the season, and she instantly led the way, remarking, however, that she must consult her husband, to the amusement of Mrs. Dalzell, who was aware that the said husband was a very nominal authority:

Madama Cecchi was a perfectly despotic, though very good-humoured potentate; and "Nino," as she called him, submitted unmurmuringly to her decrees. The three rooms proved in every way desirable, except that to reach them from her own apartments, Mrs. Dalzell was obliged either to go out into the corridor, or to pass through the kitchen; but as Madama Cecchi thought this unimportant, Mrs. Dalzell said no more about it. It so happened that she had never been in the little back kitchen before, and she paused to survey the vessels, scanty in number, and of unknown shapes and uses, which stood on the shelves. She smiled and wondered what an English servant would think of the disorder and want of accommodation. All cooking was done at square holes in a kind of brick counter, into which a handful of charcoal was put when wanted; the consequence of which was, that whenever so much as an extra jug of hot water was required, the charcoal had to be lit, water fetched from the fountain, and much time spent before the demand could be supplied, for charcoal was too dear to be freely used. Among the various utensils Mrs. Dalzell spied out a little lamp, and she said, "I like these so much that I bought one yesterday, but it would not burn last night, and I forgot to tell my courier to examine it."

"Where is it? let us make my husband look at it —he is *capace di tutto*," said Madama Cecchi; "Nino! Ni! come here."

Nino, or rather Giovanbattista, appeared from another room, bowed to his lodger, and asked what was the matter. He was, like most of the Roman men, a great contrast to the female part of the population, being slender, middle-sized, with taper hands, and not

a trace of the muscle and strength which characterize nothern nations. Black-haired and black-bearded, he had dark soft eyes, which were at once sad, and arch, and subtle, as only Italian eyes can be, and a pleasant tenor voice, much more agreeable than his wife's; but the sound so exactly like most of those which Mrs. Dalzell heard in the streets, that she was apt constantly to look round, fancying that her landlord was beside her. He turned the lamp upside down, examined it, and inquired if the signora had blown into it when she bought it. On hearing that this precaution had not occurred to her, he shook his head, and evidently thought its defects were no more than she deserved, but at once gave his most serious attention to remedying them. Just then a crash as of falling plates was heard somewhere near: Madama Cecchi hurried off with exclamations of despair, and directly afterwards, her voice and the maid's were heard uplifted to a most amazing pitch; then a sound was heard, as if the girl had received a box on the ear, after which Madama Cecchi returned, cheerful and smiling as before, and not in the least ruffled by what had occurred. Mrs. Dalzell made some remark on the cause of the clatter, and the padrona replied, "Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear! it is this *benedetta figliuola*, Filomena, who makes me desperate;" but the despair did not seem to go very deep, nor the offending Filomena to be very repentant, for immediately after she came by, looking just as rosy and merry as usual.

The prospect of a new habitation was very welcome to the three whom it chiefly concerned, especially to Vincenzo, who in spite of his carving was fast again becoming a prey to melancholy and languor. He had

no friends to enliven him with visits; Nanna was more of a torment than anything else; and dearly as he loved Irene, a girl's society could not make up to him for what he had lost. Any change was welcome to him; the new project was thorough refreshment; the preparations for departure positively delightful; he did not even shrink from the notion of being conveyed over the rough streets, which the others dreaded much for him, and only considered possible, when fully sanctioned by his surgeon. The transit proved less painful than they had expected; but all were thankful when he had been safely conveyed up the long staircases, carried by Cecchi and Mrs. Dalzell's courier, and laid on the sofa in the sunny sitting-room, which was now to be his own. Irene was almost too happy, between hearing that she was to be Madame Marriotti's pupil, and finding herself mistress of a little room which seemed palatial luxury to her. Her felicity was beyond expression, when she found that a piano had been hired for her, and was placed in the sitting-room; and she flew about, showing everything to Nanna, darting back to Vincenzo for additional sympathy, springing to the side of Mrs. Dalzell with a new burst of gratitude, and making acquaintance with the padrona, whose heart was speedily won by her frank delight, and all whose sympathies were enlisted for the invalid boy, as he lay with smiling, grateful looks, too weary to answer his sister's transports, and only wishing to lie still and watch the various arrangements which kept all the others fully employed. They had brought a few articles of furniture with them to add to that already in the rooms, where there was not much space to spare; and Nino, his wife, Nanna, Mrs. Dalzell, and Irene, were still in

full conclave when the clock announced, in that Italian fashion so mysterious to foreigners, that the hour of five had come. At the same time, the bell rang, Filomena opened the door and admitted a boy, with two tin chests on his head, each containing a pan of charcoal and a dinner. This broke off all discussion. Mrs. Dalzell left Nanna to see about one, and retired to her own sitting-room to eat the other, not without a compliment from both landlord and landlady on her looking so well that afternoon. It was deserved; Mrs. Dalzell felt more occupied, more happy, than she had done for many months. Till this time, do what she would, all the beauty, all the associations of Italy, had, at the most, only filled her mind; while at heart there was always the aching of a grief for which she found no cure. Strange! this one little good deed had done what neither Art nor Nature could effect; it had lulled the pain to rest, for a time, at all events; and as she sat alone that evening, willing to let Vincenzo rest, after a day very exciting and fatiguing to him; although her book remained unread, and her work lay idly upon her lap, it was not now because her thoughts had wandered and her eyes were dim with tears. She thought anxiously, yet hopefully, of Irene, and with a still tenderer feeling of the invalid Vincenzo, whose grateful and cheerful looks that day had keenly reminded her of another invalid, very dear to her, whom she had once tended and watched over as only a mother can watch over her sole treasure. More than once she had found the name of Arthur rising to her lips instead of that of Vincenzo, who, henceforward, must be dear to her, for the sake of that dead son, as well as for his own. It was much to have rescued this

brother and sister from destitution: it was like an answer to the question that had often forced itself upon her—What the future could have for her to do? Through these orphans it might yet have an interest. She thought of what it might bring them, far more anxiously than they did—one dreaming on her pillow, with lips parted into a smile, and a rosy flush on her cheek—the other, awake, and taking courage from the thought, that though his own faith had failed, the promise their dying father had trusted in had stood firm, bidding himself remember that on the ruin of his own hopes had risen new ones for Irene, and thinking, with deep gratitude, of her who had rescued them from actual starvation. Surely, with these two near her, Mrs. Dalzell could not help feeling satisfied and cheered.

Thus it gradually came to pass that, while she visited the sights of Rome, entered occasionally into society, and was always ready to take part in any scheme proposed by her friends, these two orphans became Mrs. Dalzell's chief thought. They interested her not only for their own sakes, but as specimens of Italians—a race unknown to her; and Italians, rather than English, they certainly were, though Vincenzo betrayed the English part of his parentage at times, by a certain reserve and steadfastness, joined, however, to much Italian enthusiasm; but Irene, with the soft and brilliant dark eyes of her Sora mother, had inherited a southern grace, an instinctive courtesy, a fire and impetuosity, that never came from England. Pretty she was not; she had inherited none of the beauty for which the women of Sora are celebrated, and with which her mother had been pre-eminently

endowed; yet her slight figure, and the open brow whence dark shining hair was braided back, the marked and expressive eyebrows, and the lovely eyes, made hers a poetical face; and the instant changes at word or look, from the serious and pensive expression usual to it when at rest, to archness and mirth, had a charm so bewitching that many beautiful women would have been far less attractive than Irene. In her, there was none of the abrupt English honesty, so repulsive to Italians. To be charmingly courteous was her nature, but she was no less true than Vincenzo; as Mrs. Dalzell, in time, discovered, after being a little mistrustful of what she had heard her countrymen assert in other cases to be insincerity—sometimes justly, sometimes much otherwise; but Italian faults and virtues are almost equally perplexing to English people, and so are those of the English to Italians.

Mrs. Dalzell had expected to find Irene the best possible guide to Rome, especially as both brother and sister were proud of their birthplace, and spoke of "*Roma mia*" and "*i miei Romani*" with pride worthy of an ancient senator; but to her surprise, Irene knew nothing about it. Vincenzo too read a book about Rome Pagan and Rome Christian, and their historical associations, with the delight of a blind man when enabled to see. It was the first book that awoke any lively interest in him; he seemed to have found a glorious new world, and Mrs. Dalzell often could not resist a smile as she heard him telling Irene, with the utmost enthusiasm, of some fact trite to all the rest of the world. On questioning Irene, it appeared that she had seen hardly any of the great sights which attract travellers from every land. She had, now and then,

gone to the Colosseum, with her mother or Nanna, to pray at the stations; she had been sometimes at the Vatican, because every one goes there on the public day at Easter, and Vincenzo was fond of visiting it; and that seemed to be the extent of her acquaintance with the ruins and galleries. Mrs. Dalzell could hardly believe that she heard aright, and asked if Roman girls never went to see sights. Irene said they hardly ever did; they sometimes went to shops, or on the Pincio, or in the Corso, with their mothers, or paid a morning visit, but not often to see sights; and she could not understand the notion of walking for exercise sake, when asked if she were not accustomed to do so. "Papa liked walking; but then, he was English. When he was alive, he often took her and Vincenzo to the Villa Pamphili Doria, or the Villa Borghese on festas."

"Have you never seen any of the ceremonies in St. Peter's? Never been there at Easter?"

"Oh! no. Romans hardly ever do go; there is such a crowd—people behave so ill, and push so. The foreigners say, 'We must see these things, because we have come from the ends of the earth to do so, and you Romans can see them when you will;' but then they come and come every year, and do not cease, and thus we see nothing."

"Besides, as for Easter day, every Romanist is obliged to hear mass in his parish church, unless the priest gives him express leave to go somewhere else," added Vincenzo. "The rules are very strict; you receive a certificate to show that you were there, and some days after the priest comes to each house for it, and you would get into terrible disgrace if you could

not produce it; your name publicly posted up in the church, and a great uproar made, and it would be remembered against you to a certainty if you wanted anything done for you. All power here is in the priests' hands."

"I always fancy there is a strange contempt, mixed with fear, in Signor Cecchi's manner when the priests are alluded to," said Mrs. Dalzell; "and his wife once privately begged me never to name politics before him, it excited him so."

"She is imprudent enough herself, but she knows she is safe with us. If half what I have heard her say were repeated, she would see the inside of a prison speedily."

"Not really, Vincenzo?"

"Really, Mrs. Dalzell; a careless word is enough to send a man to Spoleto for life."

The English lady thought this must be strange exaggeration; but Vincenzo did not seem at all inclined to pursue the subject, so she turned to another.

"There is one ceremony that I mean to see and take Irene to this year; she ought to hear Guglielmi's *Pastorale;* what do you say, Vincenzo?"

"I would go if I could," he answered, "just to see St. Peter's by night; but as for the music I don't care for that kind. I declare"—and herein he spoke the feelings of many of his fellow-citizens—"when I hear it I am ready to stop my ears and run out of the church."

"I hope Madame Marriotti will teach Irene better," said Mrs. Dalzell, smiling. "How did the lesson go to-day?"

"Oh, pretty well," said Irene, with a blush; "I am

afraid we both got out of patience; but a last she said I was improving."

Indeed, teacher and pupil had both such impatient tempers, that Mrs. Dalzell had feared the alliance would speedily break up; but Madame Marriotti in her heart was very glad of this new interest, and fast becoming extremely proud of her pupil. She required entire devotion to music, with the most watchful and exciting jealousy, and Irene was ready to give it. Love for her art gave her fervour which took the place of perseverance, and she became so absorbed in it, that Vincenzo silently felt, or more truly, fancied, that he had grown a secondary object with her. Mrs. Dalzell's society, visits from such of her friends as desired to purchase his carvings, and the new delight of reading, kept, however, this feeling in the background; and Irene, radiant with hope and energy, looked scarcely happier than did Vincenzo, lying on his couch, with a table drawn up to it, with books and a handful of wild flowers upon it, or a basket of fruit, destined to be copied in lime or pear wood. Mrs. Dalzell sometimes wondered whether he had quite realized that his destiny was to be an invalid for life. Nothing could change that fiat; they must never hope to see him walk again, except with crutches.

CHAPTER V.

Quem vidistis, pastores, dicite; annunciate nobis, in terris quis apparuit; Natum vidimus; et choros angelorum collaudantes Dominum.

Office of the Pastorale.

THE idea of going to hear the *Pastorale* did not fall to the ground; it was one of the few ceremonies which Mrs. Dalzell could witness, without failing to attend

the services of her own church, and she had particularly wished to see it. To go with a large party was the last thing she desired, and she named her intentions to none but Madame Marriotti, who had first inspired her with the wish, and now, much to Mrs. Dalzell's surprise, immediately declared that she should like, of all things, to go too. An expedition at three o'clock a. m., was such a singular freak for so frail a creature, that Mrs. Dalzell would hardly consent, though she acknowledged that her pleasure in music was always doubled when Madame Marriotti was by to comment on it; and the little old lady was as wilful as any spoiled child, and got her way. Accordingly, on Christmas eve, instead of going to bed, Irene came to Mrs. Dalzell's sitting-room, where she found her friend lying on the sofa, resting till the hour to set out should arrive. Resisting an invitation to share the couch, Irene, with her dog, which, as usual, had followed her, sat down on the floor before an open stove, where a wood fire burned brightly. Irene occupied herself with reading the music which was to be her next lesson, and Mrs. Dalzell, between sleep and waking, opened her eyes sometimes, and looked at the slight figure and bending profile of the young girl, on which the firelight gleamed. She was absorbed in her task; one hand, unconsciously, beat time on the back of her dog; her brow was sometimes knit, as she looked with austerity at some difficult passage, and then expanded as she mastered it, and smiled and lifted her eyes, as if to those of some imaginary auditor. Now and then, still murmuring half inaudible notes, she added a piece of wood from the tall basket which stood by the stove, or moved the coffee-pot on its iron tripod into a hotter

position; while the dog looked on with great interest, or directed an intelligent glance towards the cups and saucers on the table, as much as to say that if they really intended to have a meal at this extraordinary hour, it was advisable to lose no more time. A ring at the outer door announced Madame Marriotti; Irene sprang up, and went to let her in, disencumbering her of a multitude of wraps; while the old lady diminishing momentarily in size, as she was released first from one, then another, was at last reduced to dimensions fit for a fairy godmother, for which she might very well have passed. She was in a fidget about this unusual expedition, and at first rejected vehemently the coffee which Irene poured out for her; but ended by drinking it, in an absent, unconscious way, while Mrs. Dalzell sought her bonnet and cloak. Irene looked very mirthful and mischievous, and moved so noiselessly, and spoke so low, that Madame Marriotti's nerves were speedily irritated by this mysterious conduct, and she demanded, sharply, what was the matter with her.

"Only I feel as if we were plotting something very wonderful and secret. We are the only people awake in the palace; we are going out directly without their knowing it; it is a secret expedition, and we are conspirators."

"Nonsense, child; don't talk of conspirators, I beg; we had enough of that in '31; how can you be so silly?" asked Madame Marriotti, uneasily.

"Oh, I think a conspiracy must be so interesting!" answered Irene, gaily, too young to remember much about the troubles that had hailed the election of the reigning Pope, Gregory XVI.

"Heaven help the child! she may live to know more about it," muttered the old lady, who, though she chose to lead a somewhat secluded life, knew most things, public or secret, that went on in Rome, and was well aware of the storms that were gathering there. "Mrs. Dalzell, are you ready? Do let us go, if we are going, and have done with it. Where are you running off to now, child?"

"Only to take Tevere back, and see if Vincenzo is asleep," answered Irene, running away with a little lamp in her hand, through the empty kitchen. The Cecchi had gone to the *funzione* at San Luigi, and had not yet returned; the rooms were still as death, and she speedily re-appeared, a little excited and awed by the silence and darkness. Madame Marriotti, still looking ruffled, was wrapping herself slowly up again, an operation suddenly delayed by the loss of a glove. Irene and Mrs. Dalzell looked for it in vain; Madame Marriotti fumed and fidgeted. At last, Irene emerged from under a table, holding up something dark, a single kid finger. "I am afraid," said she, half stifled by suppressed laughter, "that Tevere must have eaten the rest!"

"Tevere!" exclaimed Madame Marriotti, nearly speechless; "my glove!"

"Poor dog, he will certainly be ill," said Mrs. Dalzell, anxiously. "How did he seem, Irene?"

"I don't think it has disagreed with him, though I am sadly afraid he ate the button too," replied Irene, half suffocated with amusement at the catastrophe, and the indignation of her bereaved friend.

"I hope it will, I hope it will. The ill-mannered, inconsiderate beast," exclaimed Madame Marriotti. "Of

course I shall catch cold, I must make up my mind to that; so we had better go at once. Such nonsense as it all is!" She hurried towards the door, nearly falling over Mrs. Dalzell's courier, who was coming to announce the carriage. Both Irene and Mrs. Dalzell were quite aware that this irritation only meant, that the unwonted expedition had strung their friend's excitable nerves a little too highly; so they were not in the least disturbed by it, but settled themselves speedily in their corners of the carriage, which had thundered into the quadrangle, and now thundered out again in a way likely to discompose all the sleepers in the palace, and auguring ill for the secrecy of Irene's expedition. Till within an hour or two there had been an incessant hum of voices and roll of carriages in the streets: all Rome was abroad, hastening to and from the midnight mass at various churches; but now all was still; only a few men or women were seen in the dark deserted streets; and the occasional ringing of bells from some church was almost the only sound. The Tiber glided below the bridge, swift, silent, and tawny in the moonlight; not a living creature was visible about St. Angelo, which rose massive and desolate, as if once more a tomb; and the Archangel on its summit looked like some indistinct and threatening form descended from the gloomy sky above. The piazza of St. Peter stretched out in an extent of space which the eye could hardly compass, and the large semicircular colonnades appeared to expand themselves, as though to embrace a world. Lamps were hung here and there against their columns, marking out their circuit in the darkness; lights shone in the belfry, where a deep-toned bell was ringing; the fountains

lifted up their silver jets, and in front rose the basilica, dark, enormous, and appearing to retreat before the advancing visitor.

Mrs. Dalzell and Irene united their strength to lift the ponderous curtain, or rather mat, which hung before the door by which they entered; Madame Marriotti slipped in, they followed, and at once found themselves in a world of shadow so vast, so strange, that they stood still involuntarily to gaze. Between every arch stood one tall lighted taper, and under the cupola, the crowd of ever-burning lamps around the tomb of St. Peter shone out clear and pale, like a garland of stars. Not a flame but burned up motionless in the still, perfumed atmosphere, but on all sides was gloom and silence, and the cupola seemed to rise up and vanish, as if it contained a whole sky filled with soft darkness, like that of a moonless night in summer. Few were present at this hour of the night, and in the area which no man has ever beheld full, even when the jubilee attracts multitudes from every land, the units present on this Christmas eve were scarcely perceptible. Now and then some one crossed the nave; three or four knelt amid the circle of light at the Apostle's tomb; and a woman was bowed before his statue, immovable as the bronze figure above her. All the colour, the splendour, the ornament, all that delights or displeases the eye by day, was now blended together; and doubtless it was this absence of striking detail that gave the impression of boundless space in the building, which by day seems in comparison small.

Mrs. Dalzell walked slowly up the nave towards the eastern end, where were seats erected for the public functionaries and the ladies who would be present at

the great ceremony of the morrow. Mrs. Dalzell took her place here, and sat waiting and expecting the service to begin; Madame Marriotti had fallen into a reverie, from which a whisper of Irene roused her suddenly.

"What did you say?" she asked quickly in Italian, which she always spoke to her pupil.

"I cannot help thinking the service is beginning in the chapel of the choir," repeated Irene, looking down the basilica to a spot where lights were glittering, reflected in the pavement like moons in a lake.

"Well, are we not there! Why, where are we? Mrs. Dalzell, why did you come here?"

"Seeing these seats I really thought the service was here, and I trusted to you."

"Could any one believe such folly?" exclaimed the old lady, irascibly. "A baby might have known the *Pastorale* would be in the chapel of the choir; now we shall not find a single seat, and I can tell you I can't stand all the time—in such a crowd too—" While ejaculating this she was hurrying down the aisle; but when they reached the chapel they found, as she had predicted, every bench filled, and a crowd beginning to collect at the open gates.

The chapel blazed with light; a galaxy of waxen tapers illuminated the altar, and filled the great candelabrum which rose high in a pyramidal form from the pavement, and two immense tapers burnt on either side of a high desk from which a priest would read portions of the service. The monsignori, in their white fur tippets, had already taken their places on the highest row of seats, right and left of the altar; the singers in the galleries above were turning over their

music; the canons, distinguished by their grey fur mantles, came in from time to time through a side door; and the schoolboys of St. Peter's, in purple dresses and white *cotte* or surcoats, bordered with lace, occupied the lowest row of seats, level with the congregation, who, for the most part, appeared to be of the poorer class. Beside the altar sat a bishop, the snow-white mitre on his head, and beside him stood a purple-robed attendant; priests in gorgeous white and gold dresses officiated in the complicated service, which Mrs. Dalzell vainly tried to follow, though she had what no one else present appeared to possess — a service book. Madame Marriotti had made her way through the crowd with her companions, and now stood looking disconsolately at the full benches, without a hope that any one would move for her; but in a few minutes a young man rose, touching his neighbour, and they gave up their seats to the new comers, who all three contrived to find room, while the two gentlemen retired into the crowd—one, however, standing so that he could still see Irene, who was too much absorbed and impressed by the scene to discover that he scarcely ever removed his eyes from the intent face which she uplifted towards the organ gallery. Looking at her, Mrs. Dalzell perceived how differently these gorgeous ceremonies affect the northern and southern minds. To herself it was a splendid pageant; the glitter, the movements of the priests, the unfamiliar tongue, the music of the *Pastorale* itself, which rose and rolled around the chapel in waves of sound, all seemed to her, ready as she was to receive a solemn impression, but parts of a magnificently acted scene, that could not be allied in any way to the shepherds

watching on the lonely hills of Bethlehem, and the angels' song of peace in the skies; and she thought with satisfaction of the simple service and the familiar hymn which she should hear on the morrow morning in her own church, even while she acknowledged the grandeur of this night service. But Irene was a true daughter of the south; all that possessed colour and light, all that appealed to the senses, touched her at once; and it was quite involuntarily that, with all the Roman Catholics present, she sank on her knees as the music slowly died into a whisper, breathing the words, "*O graciosa Mater.*" All knelt for a few moments with clasped hands and bended heads, and then rose, and after one more magnificent burst of song, the service was concluded. All left the chapel, Mrs. Dalzell still feeling almost as if in a dream; Madame Marriotti whispering with extreme indignation, "I suppose you know we have not heard Guglielmi's music after all? They actually sang Basili's; I never heard of such a thing! To come here instead of being in my bed, and hear Basili's music instead of Guglielmi's. I call it a great deal too bad!"

As they came into the portico they perceived that a dense fog had come on; the Vatican loomed dimly through it; the fountains tossed up plumy spray into the air, grey as the mist with which it mingled—dawn was beginning to break. Madame Marriotti shivered, and Mrs. Dalzell looked anxiously round for her servant and the carriage. Discovering both in a few minutes, she came back to where her friend was standing, and hurried her towards it, without noticing the absence of Irene, till she was about to step in herself. Asking in haste where she was, Madame Mar-

riotti recollected that Irene had said she was going into the basilica again for another look. Mrs. Dalzell was just going back in search of her, when she perceived her coming down the steps, escorted by the stranger who had given up his place to them. She sprang into the carriage; the young man bowed to her and Mrs. Dalzell, and they drove off. Irene was questioned as to what had occurred, but there was not much to tell; she had wandered up the nave to the tomb and back again, and when she came into the portico, she could not see any carriage, nor any one whom she knew, through the mist. She was looking round when some one came up, and said in Italian that he believed her friends were just getting into their carriage; and she, recognising the gentleman who had been so courteous in the chapel, was very glad to be escorted down the long succession of steps. This was all; Madame Marriotti had given her two or three searching looks as she told her story, though the whole affair seemed exceedingly simple to Mrs. Dalzell; but Irene related it so frankly and simply that the fairy was appeased, volunteered the remark that the singing had certainly been very well done, and bade them quite an affectionate good night, when they set her down at her own door. There was something very attractive about the little old lady after all; Irene loved her heartily, and had, besides, a child's pleasure in feeling that others were pleased with her: and, when they reached their own abode, she ran gaily upstairs, singing cadences from the music which she had been listening to, and not in the least depressed by the dim dreary light of the expiring lamps, or the haunted aspect of the old palace.

CHAPTER VI.

Fair Italy!
E'en in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other clime's fertility.
Childe Harold.

THE Epiphany came near, and the shops became filled with pretty trifles; for Epiphany is, at Rome, what the New Year is in France; every one gives presents to every one. Irene was occupied to a degree that a few months before would have seemed intolerable to her: but though engaged in the serious and constant study of music, learning French, reading English with Vincenzo, and Italian with Mrs. Dalzell—nominally for Mrs. Dalzell's instruction—still she found time to knit, in great secrecy, a pair of stockings, which were to be a *Beffana*, or Epiphany gift, for her friend. Every Roman girl learns to knit as soon as her little fingers can hold the needles, and Irene took all possible pains to make her present work a miracle of skill. She did it chiefly in her short but constant visits to the sitting-room of her landlady, who, while keeping her own hands warmly round her *scaldino*, admired Irene's industry, looked at the work she herself had heaped on a table by her, and regretted that she was so much occupied that she never had any time to knit or embroider, or even mend. Sometimes she would sew on two or three of the thread buttons made by the nuns of Viterbo, and much favoured by Romans, or would add a string when it was wanting; but, in a few minutes, her large soft hands returned to their old position, the work lay forgotten, and Madama Cecchi

had commenced one of the conversations which never ended till she was summoned to the kitchen, or Irene was obliged to go away, always accompanied to the door by the padrona, and exchanging the customary "*A rivederla.*"

Madama Cecchi was really a very prepossessing person, and Mrs. Dalzell was glad to find that she took a great interest in her young lodgers. She was well pleased and amused when, on wet days, the padrona knocked at her door, begging pardon for intruding, but she wanted the signorina to cheer her with a little visit; or when she appeared with her fresh, cheerful face in Vincenzo's apartment, to see how he was prospering. As she rarely opened a book, though she had had curiosity enough to read a few prohibited by the *Index*, was more apt to order embroidery than to make it, very seldom wrote a letter, and had an active servant, Madama Cecchi might have been expected to find time hang rather heavy, especially as her husband was engaged in business and absent all day; and now that political causes had made their circumstances unprosperous, she had become, as she expressed it, "*morta al mondo*"—dead to the world—and never went into society, except on a Sunday evening. Her metaphorical death did not, however, prevent constant visits, with her husband, to the theatre—that necessity of a Roman; but as this only occupied the hours of night, those of the day still remained to be filled up. Mrs. Dalzell found it a mystery to the last how the padrona disposed of them; but enter her sitting-room when she would in the afternoon, there sat Madama Cecchi, in her arm-chair, her work beside her, occasionally so far advanced as to be pinned to the heavy cushion

invariably used at Rome; a book of prayers near it, a watch in an open case on the table, and her hands nestled round the brown earthenware *scaldino*, full of charcoal, which, when it became less glowing, she poked with her scissors. Madama Cecchi was meditating, and the subject was tolerably sure to be politics, dress, or the delinquencies of servants.

At this time politics were becoming the prevailing thought in Rome; a liberty of speech and sentiment, unknown for centuries, was springing up, and would not be crushed; the moral atmosphere was charged with electricity, and the Romans became more excited with every breath they drew. Madama Cecchi was a thorough Republican; but though louder in speech than her husband, he more than matched her in vehemence of feeling. They knew what oppression and a bad Government was from dire experience — that experience which turns an abstract horror of injustice and oppression into intense personal hatred of the oppressors—and the friends who came to their house joined them in whispered schemes and views of reformation, which Pope Gregory would have considered as high treason. He was aware of the feeling abroad, as new and stringent edicts perpetually proved: but there was already that thrill throughout Rome which precedes great changes — as the quivering of the leaves foretels that a tempest is at hand, though, as yet, the sky is clear. The contagion had even reached Vincenzo, who looked forward eagerly to evening visits from Signor Cecchi—read Sismondi's *Italian Republics* with sudden and insatiable interest; and discoursed enthusiastically with Irene on the future of Italy; rather to the consternation of Mrs. Dalzell, whose English

education had not prepared her to sympathize with these views. Many times she was infinitely diverted by hearing a political conversation between Irene and Madama Cecchi, whose Italian she was beginning to understand, suddenly break off, as the latter recollected some misdeed of Filomena's—that most trustworthy of servants, but a "*donna materiale*," with no genius, no invention! and then would come a history, told with expressive pantomime, of former servants; one whom she had trusted entirely, and who robbed her, and turned out a *scelerata;* and another whom she could not endure, because, though she was honest, indeed, and never had done anything infamous, she was without heart and without sentiment; and then would come the darling subject of dress, which she had thoroughly studied, and in which, comparatively poor as she was, she spent much more money than ever did Mrs. Dalzell.

Being very much gratified by her English tenant's interest in Roman manners and customs, Madama Cecchi had proposed to take Mrs. Dalzell, on the eve of the Epiphany, to see the market of St. Eustachio, near the Pantheon, lighted up at night. It is the custom of the Romans to go there at a late hour; no buying or selling goes on, but there is a constant going and coming—a turning of night into day—a *festa*, in short. As it happened, heavy rain prevented the expedition, but Irene consoled herself by finishing the stockings, and watching the progress of the *beffana* which Vincenzo was making—a carving of pomegranates, fir cones, and other fruits, which he had copied from some brought in one day, by Irene, from a fruit-stall in a neighbouring piazza.

When Mrs. Dalzell came into their sitting-room the next day, Madama Cecchi followed, to offer a bouquet and witness the presentation of the two other gifts, in which she had taken a lively interest, greatly enjoying the mystery about them. Vincenzo's was first given, and Mrs. Dalzell was much pleased; it had never occurred to her that this carving, with which she knew he had taken extra pains, was for herself. She particularly admired the fruit of the stone pine.

"I often see them on the fruit-stalls," she said; "where do they come from, and what are they used for? Surely there are not enough about Rome to furnish all the shops?"

"No, they come from Ravenna; there are whole woods of them there; we spent one summer at Ravenna, and used to sit all day long in the woods."

"And the gnats!" said Irene. "I could not enjoy it, because they bit so; but Vincenzo was bewitched by those gloomy old woods, and he never minded their biting. I thought the woods as dismal as the Pantheon."

"But nobody eats the cones, do they?" asked Mrs. Dalzell, half in jest, which, being repeated to Madama Cecchi in Italian, sent her into a hearty fit of laughter.

"No, no one eats them," answered Vincenzo, also laughing; "we put them before the fire, and then they open and the seeds come out: you have tasted them in sausages, surely?—like little almonds."

Impatient signs from the padrona to Irene now caused her to produce the stockings.

"I hope you will like them," she said, offering them rather doubtfully, to Mrs. Dalzell. "I never noticed,

till lately, that you always wore silk, and there was nothing else that I could make."

"Yes, my dear child, I like them very much indeed. Do you really mean that you knitted them? It is more than ever I could learn to do, though an old friend tried hard to teach me."

"Oh yes, I made them," replied Irene, quite restored to her usual gaiety; "and I liked making them since they were for you."

"*Calze sono nojose a tricotare, accommodare, lavare, piegare, e rifare*," observed Madama Cecchi, with a laugh. Mrs. Dalzell looked an inquiry, and Vincenzo added, "It is a Roman proverb; we say that stockings are tiresome in every way—to knit, to fit, to wash, to fold, to mend."

"Then I owe Irene all the more thanks. Now, as I did not know of this custom, of course I have no *beffana* for anybody, so you must tell me what I shall give you, without compliment, as you say here, Vincenzo."

He looked pleased, and replied, after some reflection, "I should like very much to have an engraving of Guido's St. Michael—the one in the Capuchin Church, you know, I think I could copy it as a carving."

"And Irene?"

"A box of English pins, if you please," was the eager reply.

"English pins, my dear? are they curiosities? I think they are very like Italian ones."

"Oh no, indeed, they are much better. Papa once gave mamma some, and she only used them on *feste*. We cannot buy them here." She turned to Madama Cecchi for confirmation.

38.

"No, in truth; an English lady, who once lodged with me, made me a present of some, and, though it is said to bring ill luck to take pins, I could not refuse; I will make you see them," and she hastened away, and returned with a dozen white pins in a box, and an Italian one to compare with them. The superiority of the English article was manifest, and she whispered, mysteriously, that there *was* a shop in Rome where English pins could be bought; great ladies could obtain them; but it must not be talked about, since pin-making was a monopoly in the hands of one person, and fine and imprisonment were the penalties for importing the article.

"Instead of offering madama a *beffana*, I am going to ask her to do me a favour," said Mrs. Dalzell, in the best Italian she could muster. An attempt on her part to speak Italian was regarded by the padrona as a personal compliment, and, with a deep curtesy, she replied, "Too much honour!"

"I want—Irene, you must translate this—I want madama and her husband to go with you and me to the theatre."

Instead of translating, Irene, in the effusion of her gratitude, threw her arms around Mrs. Dalzell's neck.

"And tell her she must choose the play and the theatre."

Something of a sigh escaped Vincenzo: he took up a book, and seemed not to hear the gratified thanks of Madama Cecchi and the delight of Irene.

All classes and all ages go to the theatre at Rome. There is the Teatro Regio for the upper class; for the lower the Capranica, where comedies are acted in the

local dialect, and laughter and applause thunder through the house, till any one but a Roman would be ready to stop his ears and rush frantically out, and several others chiefly frequented by the *mezzo ceto*. There is little reading among Romans, especially among the Roman women; and as for the girls, story books are non-existent, and romances can only be read by stealth; but their lively intelligent minds must have some food, and mothers who would hardly let their daughters read *Paul and Virginia*, do not hesitate to take them to the theatre, where they learn at least all that romances could teach them. The stage stands in the place of light literature. Moreover, the theatre is a place, in which to see and to be seen, better far than in the drive in the Corso or on the Pincio; for in the theatre people sit still, looks—possibly signals, too—can be exchanged, and many a marriage has been thus made. A fair face strikes the eye of some one; he looks again and again, and goes home determined to marry the owner. If he be of an ingenuous disposition he tells his parents, and entreats them to obtain the damsel for him; then come inquiries concerning dowry, introductions, negotiations; or else, rejecting this course, he takes other means of communicating with the lady of his heart, and in spite of vigilance, almost Oriental, on the part of relations, a romance often begins, and ends —as the fates choose. Mrs. Dalzell knew nothing of all this; she only supposed that she was giving Irene pleasure, and gratifying her courteous landlord and his wife; she would have been incredulous, indeed, had any one told her that one visit to the Teatro Valle might influence Irene's whole destiny.

Madama Cecchi selected the *Sonnambula* as the

opera, and the Valle as the theatre, and the first evening that she could get a box Mrs. Dalzell ordered her carriage, and took the party there; Irene dressed in white, Madama Cecchi magnificent in blue silk and an ermine mantle. She looked discomforted by Mrs. Dalzell's plain black attire, but was too polite to make any remark. Vincenzo had to be left with no better companion than old Nanna, and Irene was half unwilling to leave him; but he cut her caressing words short with an abruptness that drove away her smiles for some time. Mrs. Dalzell made no observation; but as she bade him good night, there was something so kind and compassionate in her tone that he felt that she had divined his feelings, and did not attempt to conceal his heavy sigh. As he heard the carriage roll away, he laid down his book and sank back on his couch, with pale, dispirited looks, and fell into so deep a reverie that he heard nothing of Nanna's chattering. She did not find it out, and went on enjoying the sound of her own voice till he raised himself, asked her cheerfully to fetch his coffee, and took up a copy of manuscript verses which Cecchi had brought in for him to read, with an emphatic warning not to let it lie about. Vincenzo had seen several by the same hand before, and marvelled (as, indeed, all Rome were doing) who the daring poet could be who lashed the corruptions of Church and State with such stinging satire. His works were everywhere read by stealth and in manuscript, but his name remained a profound secret, even to the Argus-eyed police, as was proved by fresh verses continually appearing. These last were in a new strain, so tender and graceful that the writer must have been something far more than a mere satirist. Vincenzo owed

him something, for they took him out of himself, and he entirely forgot the bitter despondency that had overwhelmed him an hour before, as he read and re-read the little poem, and speculated what and who the author could be, and whether Cecchi knew, a matter about which Vincenzo had never been able to satisfy himself.

The boxes on the second tier at the Valle are capable of holding six people, of whom two can see well. Mrs. Dalzell put the padrona and Irene in the seats of honour in front, and sat further back, caring much less for the opera than to witness the pleasure of her companions, only regretting that "Nino" was no better off. Resigned to his destiny, however, he sat contentedly in the back part of the box, which his wife declared was quite good enough for men. The audience was almost exclusively Italian; ermine tippets, just like Madama Cecchi's, swept over the fronts of most of the boxes, and their Roman owners sat within, with attention divided between each other and the opera. Madama Cecchi seemed to know who everybody was, and nodded to her acquaintances, and made remarks on the rest of the audience just as everybody else was doing.

"There is Signora Monteverde! see signorina, with her lover, Count Antonio. Ah, the Contessina Emilia, look at her wreaths! Ah, good evening, Enrichetta! Look, Nino, two boxes off. Signorina, signorina! who is that looking at our box, as if he saw the Madonna and all the angels here? Why, it is Count Clementi—our Count Clementi—the contessa's son! Ah, *signorina mia!*"

Irene coloured, and Mrs. Dalzell leant forward

enough to see with what intense interest a young Italian was gazing up at them. She recognised the hero of the *Pastorale*. Irene had to explain to Madama Cecchi, who was much amused and interested, and Mrs. Dalzell was fearful that her remarks might fix the meeting in Irene's mind; but she need not have distrusted her discretion; the padrona would by no means have encouraged dangerous ideas; she would have been horror-stricken at the bare notion of an alliance between the young heretic cantatrice and the noble Count Clementi; and of her own accord she turned to another subject, and asked Irene if she saw a lady, who, with a pretty child and a young and very handsome man, had just entered. "Signora Olivetti and her daughter, and that is young Ravelli, who, they say, is to marry the little one, when she is old enough. Your Madame Marriotti knows the signora. She and her husband are liberal; they have been in England, eh, Nino? Did not Signor Olivetti once say, if he could have chosen what he pleased to bring away from England, he would have had a hat full of freedom?"

Cecchi gave a kind of assenting grunt, which conveyed a warning against imprudence, and the opera beginning, all remarks were suspended. It was evident that the audience were truly and generally musical; for, though they put up with very inferior scenery and acting, the slightest fault in the music was instantly noticed with disapprobation, while a successful cadence from the favourite singer called forth such a rapture of applause, that Mrs. Dalzell smiled, and then looked at Irene, to see if she were anticipating the time when such ovations would be hers. She looked eager and

happy, but presently turned to Mrs. Dalzell with a sigh, and said, "It is not the same without Vincenzo:" and she excited Madama Cecchi's indignation and Nino's amusement, when the opera was over, by her merciless criticisms on the acting and costumes. They went away after the play which followed the opera, without waiting for the farce; and as they rose, the young man who had been observing them rose too, and stood at the door as they came into the street. Irene met his glance, full of dark fire; she past on quickly, but the remembrance of that look haunted her for a long time; all the more that she could not help wondering, whenever she went in and out of the palace, whether she might not meet the young owner; but she never did, and at last chanced to hear that he had gone to visit his uncle, Monsignore Clementi, at his estate near Ancona. The thought of him gradually died away, for she was too busy to have time for romantic dreams, except of fame; and thus happily these two meetings, which might seriously have affected a passionate southern nature like hers, had her mind been unoccupied, had little or no real effect.

Mrs. Dalzell could not accustom herself to the stay-at-home habits of Italians, nor believe that as much air as was sufficient for health could be imbibed by loitering at a window. She declared that it might do for idle people, but not for busy ones, and took Irene out with her whenever she could; and further persuaded herself, that it would be possible to take Vincenzo for a drive, laid at full length on a mattress. He wanted more change than from his sitting-room to his bedroom; medicine had done all it could for him, but an invalid he always must be; it only remained to see

how much variety could be introduced into his life. The vehemence of delight with which he received the proposal betrayed how thirstily he had pined for change; it seemed to him that one glimpse of the green Campagna and the sapphire hills would cure him, and he listened with feverish eagerness to the discussions between Cecchi and the courier as to the best means of conveying him up and down the long staircases. It was a difficulty! But at last "Nino" bethought him that certain great ladies never attempted to mount similar staircases in their own houses, but were always carried up in such a chair as he would procure for Vincenzo. When it came, Vincenzo was irritated to find that the long confinement had so tried his nerves that he actually dreaded the attempt; he could hardly make up his mind to let Cecchi and the courier carry him down, and could not help desiring Irene not to watch him so anxiously.

A successful drive on the Pincio revived him, and made the ascent less formidable, and thenceforward Mrs. Dalzell never let anything interfere with his going out in the carriage once or twice a-week. She had a good deal of raillery to undergo from her friends in consequence, but it disturbed her very little; and there was no denying that she looked much stronger and happier since she had had these orphans to look after.

These short expeditions answered so well that Mrs. Dalzell thought she might venture on a long one, and proposed driving up Monte Mario, and letting Vincenzo return alone while she and Irene walked back by another way. Spring had advanced so far, that she hoped to find cyclamens in blossom—cyclamens, so rare in England, so common at Rome both in spring

and autumn. She was something of a botanist, and tried hard to inspire Irene with the same taste. Irene believed it was too early for *viole pazze*, but rejoiced at the idea of the expedition, and Mrs. Dalzell asked Nanna how far it was to Villa Manzi.

"I cannot say, signora," was the reply.

"Can you tell me at all?"

"Eh! a good little piece, *signora mia*."

"How much may that be?" persevered Mrs. Dalzell.

"Eh! *bella lunga*—fairly long, dear signora."

"A mile, perhaps?"

"Ay, or it may be two, or perhaps three."

In short, Nanna had not the least idea, but never thought of saying so. Armed with such accurate information, Mrs. Dalzell ordered her carriage, and they drove towards the Porta Angelica. As they passed through the streets she looked round with the interest of a foreigner, and said smiling to Vincenzo, "I suppose these things have no charm for you, but do you know I see at once three sights in this very street, every one of which should make a perfect picture."

Irene followed her eye, and exclaimed triumphantly, "I see what one is! That flower in the balcony. I suppose you have not got it in England?"

"No, I mean a living flower," said Mrs. Dalzell, amused, the more because she saw that Vincenzo had instantly discovered the real object of her admiration, an exceedingly handsome woman, who, with white drapery on her head, scarlet boddice, and coral necklace, was leaning from an upper window, with one arm round a water-jar on the sill, while she looked coquettishly upwards to a neighbour with whom she was conversing, at a window still higher, in the next house.

"Now the group below—those burly brown friars, with their hoods drawn over their heads, who are laughing with the women and offering them a pinch of snuff—you would not see such a picturesque group out of Italy."

"And this is the third," added Vincenzo, as they passed a fountain at the corner of the street, where a contadina child was leaning, her head supported pensively by her hand, her bright dress giving a touch of colour to the picture, while two great, wide-horned, meek-eyed oxen—one white, the other grey—had stopped, and, stooping side by side from their yoke, were absorbing deep slow draughts of water.

"And there is another sight which I suppose you would not see in England," added Vincenzo, as they came in view of the Tiber, up which twelve or fourteen buffaloes, with sullen, retreating heads, were slowly drawing a vessel against the stream.

"No, indeed. What a glorious day it is!" said Mrs. Dalzell, looking up to the clear, soft, deep blue sky, full of sunshine. "Ah! you two are lucky children, to be born in Rome."

"Yes, I could not live out of Rome," said Vincenzo, drawing a deep breath as he looked out upon the landscape that began to unfold before their eyes, as they drove up the steep side of Monte Mario.

"You have no curiosity to see your father's country?"

"Yes, I should certainly like to see England, especially Devonshire—is not that somewhere in the south? My father had one or two drawings of his own home—bits of green bowery shade and sparkling wayside streams, such as I never saw."

"Ah! he came from Devonshire—always a school of landscape painters. And do you really know nothing of his family—whether you have any English relations?"

"He told me that he was brought up by an aunt, who had a little money of her own, and when she found he had a talent for painting, she had him taught, and let him go away to London. He said it often afterwards grieved him to think how she must have pinched herself for his sake, even giving up her independence (for she became housekeeper in some great family) to be able to maintain him; but at the time, he said, he only thought of being a painter. He was not a landscape painter exactly, figures were what he liked best; the Royal Academy in London sent him out here. I don't understand exactly all about it, but he had money from the Academy while he was studying here, and he sent several pictures to it, and his old aunt was so happy at his success. I have several letters of hers still, papa always kept them; they are kind, simple letters. I must show them to you. Before the time came for him to go home, she died, and then he did not care to go back. He made Rome his home, and we were born here."

"Yes, you are true Romans; but Devonshire is a county to be proud of; it is one of the most historical in England; many of Queen Elizabeth's heroes came thence."

"I know so little of English history," said Vincenzo. "Irene and I ought to read some."

Irene shook her head, and Mrs. Dalzell said, "I think plays are the only things this child likes to read. Have you read anything else, Irene?"

"I know the lives of the saints, and some poems about brigands, and I can say a good deal of *Orlando* by heart, and I have read one volume of the *Ebraico Errante*."

"The what?"

"The *Ebraico Errante:* there is a great deal about the Jesuits in it."

"Eugène Sue's *Wandering Jew!*" exclaimed Mrs. Dalzell.

"Yes, some one lent papa the first volume, but I never read any more; he said I had better not."

"Indeed, I think so. And is that all?"

"No, there is the Book of Dreams," said Irene, looking mischievous.

"Don't you think us hopelessly ignorant, signora?" said Vincenzo.

"Not at all; it is a refreshing novelty to meet with people who have read nothing, and besides—Is this the villa, Irene?"

The carriage paused at the door, but repeated ringing produced no other effect than making a boy look over the high wall, and ask if they had permission to enter. Hearing that they had not, he perched himself on the wall, and regarded them with a grin at their dilemma. Irene asked if a permit were really necessary, and, probably fancying the whole party were foreigners, he pretended not to understand, to her boundless indignation. Vincenzo said that as good a view as that from the villa could be obtained from a field a little further off; and they drove on, disregarding the shouts of the young urchin, who had doubtless intended to extort a bribe. They soon came to a trellised gate, leading into a farm-yard; Vincenzo bade the driver

stop, and told Mrs. Dalzell to go through it and make the owner of the cottage close by show them where to go. His own share of the expedition ended here; he returned in the carriage to Rome, and Irene and Mrs. Dalzell were admitted by a peasant into the farm-yard. It was a veritable farm-yard, full of poultry, clucking hens, guinea fowls, and turkeys, and plenty of straw; but there was a vineyard above, reached by little flights of stone steps; the bank, in front of which there were two water troughs, was faced with stone, and plastered over: and on the plaster was a gay fresco of two women at a well, one carrying a pitcher on her head, the other bearing a child stooping over her shoulder towards a dog. The illusion was so complete that Mrs. Dalzell at first believed the well as real as the troughs; and then that they likewise were painted. On one side of the yard was a cottage shut off by a reed fence; an orange tree, laden with golden fruit, grew beside it.

They followed their guide through the vineyard, where the narrow path was bordered by spikenard, China roses, and stocks, which he called *viole*. He plucked a nosegay for each lady, and Irene added some of the abundant wild marigold—*primo fiore*, as Romans call it, because it is the first flower that ventures out in spring; and they walked on through a wheat field till they reached a rough fence, where their guide made a gap, and Mrs. Dalzell found that he expected her to scramble through it. Irene sprang down to the ground below, and helped her to follow, and they found themselves on the side of a hill where a wood had been felled, and was replaced by oak brushwood and brambles, rendered more prickly still by the sarsaparilla, which climbed and tangled everywhere,

A wide view of the Campagna and the city lay beneath them; the sunlight glittered on the Tiber, and gave a rosy tinge to the snow on the distant hills; but there was none on Soracte, which rose up blue and solitary.

Irene was more interested in seeking wild flowers than in looking at the landscape, but all the botanist in Mrs. Dalzell awoke at the sight of the novel plants around her. The dark leaves of the cyclamens, spotted with white, were abundant; but either they were the autumnal kind, or the season was too early for blossom. A plant with large smooth grass-like leaves proved to be the white asphodel; Irene did not know its name, but was able to give some information as to its uses—a kind of spirit is extracted from it. A second prize with small, intensely purple flowers, turned out to be the Italian anchusa. Mrs. Dalzell sat down, and began to arrange her treasures, whilst she asked Irene if she knew the names of no flowers except violets and roses.

"Oh yes. This is *fior della Madonna*, because it blossoms in what the peasants call the Madonna's month of May," replied Irene, pulling a twist of honeysuckle from around a dwarf oak; "and that leaf, which the pats of butter come wrapped in, is serpent's bread or else *giarra*."

"The *arum*?"

"That's it; and I know the names of some garden flowers; what you call mignonette is *amorino*, and the pansy is *suocera e nuora*—mother and daughter-in-law. Then there is a white flower—snowdrop I believe you call it—*pan di neve* is our name; it grows in that valley yonder, in the cork woods—you see them, do you not? You should see what flowers there are at Frascati and Albano! While papa was alive

we went somewhere every summer, in *villeggiatura*, you know—once to Ravenna, once to Ostia; those are not places Romans go to, but he wanted to draw there—and a great many times to Arriccia. Ah, signora! if you would but stay all the summer, and go to Frascati! There are many villas there, and we can walk in the gardens of all; you say we never walk, but you should see us in *villeggiatura!* We rise with the sun, and go out while the air is fresh and cool, then we return to breakfast, and perhaps pay visits till ten o'clock, when it grows hot, and we read, or work, or sleep till nearly sunset. Sometimes we dine in a vineyard. In the evening, if you wish for a sentimental and romantic walk—" (Mrs. Dalzell could not help smiling at the seriousness with which this was said)—"you may go to the gardens; if, on the contrary, you desire to see the great world, you go to the piazza. Frascati is a city; it has a cathedral. You find the piazza full of people, sitting in the open air, or in the *cafés*, and often there is a band playing. Just before one at night, all who know anything about it fly under cover till the sun is down, and the foreigners look so puzzled by this disappearance. After sunset we come out again."

"Sunset, and one at night! What are you dreaming of, my child?"

"Did I say one at night? Well! Oh, I quite forgot; in French hours it is seven. They are the same as English ones; are they not so?"

"Yes, I understand that; but you were as incomprehensible to me as your clocks, which Vincenzo declares talk wisdom when one understands them."

"Then, the rides," continued Irene, returning to what were evidently her pleasantest recollections; "you

should see us going out on *sombrari*—asses I mean —gentlemen and ladies riding in great parties; and before long an ass is sure to bray, and then some one cries, 'Hark! he calls on Jove;' and then the laughing!"

"What does that mean?"

"I don't know; it is what we say when asses do so."

"It is only the asses who continue to worship Jove; he is quite dethroned in his own capitol, though you still call on Bacchus."

"Oh, signora, see there, an anemone! Do you think we can get it?"

"What, have you spied out a Campagna anemone? What a purple! certainly violets and anemones are more beautiful here than anywhere else," said Mrs. Dalzell, advancing to the edge of the slope, whereby she started a hare that had lain crouched close by. It scampered off, and while she was yet stooping to reach the flower, the sharp report of a gun, as if in her very ear, so startled her that she slipped, and could only save herself by clinging to the brushwood. Vincenzo's accident had made Irene nervous: she uttered a cry and sprang forwards. The ground was extremely steep, and as slippery as glass; Mrs. Dalzell vainly tried to re-ascend, and was calling to Irene to be careful, and to see whether the peasant were anywhere near, when the owner of the gun, a young Italian, appeared. He perceived her predicament directly, and hastened to assist her, and she was soon again by the side of Irene, who, by her desire, explained the cause of her misadventure, and thanked him for his timely aid. He immediately sprang lightly down to a spot

where anemones were plentiful, and returned with a handful, which he offered to Mrs. Dalzell. She thanked him, and he walked by her side, till they had reached the wheat field. As they crossed the fence again, she observed, "This will be quite an adventure to tell Vincenzo, Irene," words which, though spoken in English, made the stranger start, and look at Irene with a smile, saying, "That speech tells me whom I have had the pleasure of meeting; the ladies who lodge with Giovanni Cecchi, is it not? He is one of my oldest friends, and I have frequently heard his wife talk of the amiable brother and sister who live with her, and of the great goodness of this lady."

"Yes, we do live there," replied Irene with a questioning glance, to which he replied with, "Have you ever heard her name Leone Nota?"

Irene remembered that the padrona always spoke of him as *un bravissimo giovane.* Her smile answered his question, and he continued eagerly—"She has often spoken of you to me, and how much you and your brother love each other."

"There are but two of us," answered Irene, rather sadly.

"Even so you are far richer than I—rich too in this friend."

"Oh yes, indeed. Have you no brother, nor sister?"

"I have two sisters," he answered.

"But then—?" said Irene, inquiringly.

"One is but just married," he returned.

"But the other?"

"A nun," replied Leone, with a look of sudden gloom. Irene's face expressed so much interest, that he added, "A nun in the convent of the *Battestine.*"

"Where is that?" asked Mrs. Dalzell, who had followed the conversation with tolerable ease.

"Near the Piazza Barberini," he answered, but his manner showed that the subject was unwelcome.

"Still you have one sister whom you can see constantly," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"It is true, but hitherto we have scarcely seen each other. She was educated at Sta. Rufina."

"Ah!" said Irene, comprehendingly; but, perceiving that Mrs. Dalzell did not see why this fact should naturally occasion an estrangement, she explained that girls are frequently sent to convents when they are four or five years old, leaving them only at sixteen or seventeen, often to be married to some one whom they have never seen. There are no holidays, so that though their families may visit them once or twice a month, they know very little of their homes, and brothers and sisters are almost strangers.

"Every one says that Vincenzo and I are an English brother and sister, not Italian," she added.

"I have often wished to know your brother," said Leone, looking at the elder lady for encouragement, aware that he must not expect any from the younger. Mrs. Dalzell liked his looks and manner, and hearing that he was a friend of her landlord, encouraged him to pay Vincenzo a visit, thinking that a new friend would be a great advantage to him. Leone's look of vivid delight surprised her; she could not understand why the acquaintance was such an object to him, nor was she enlightened by his saying to Irene, "Your brother reads much, does he not? He can get books here?"

"Oh yes, since he has been ill he has read a great

deal; the Signora Dalzell lends him books, and he has them from the church library; I bring him one every Sunday."

"Ah! you have a library—it is only for Protestants, of course. The German artists have one also; I sometimes get books thence through a friend of mine."

"You know German!" said Mrs. Dalzell, with an intonation of wonder, for she knew that it was an unusual accomplishment among Romans, to whom the language presented great difficulties, and who, moreover, were little given to study. "I thought you all detested the Germans and their language."

"We distinguish between the Austrians and the rest of Germany, signora; I do not think the language is *antipatico* to us, but the difficulties are immense to one who only has a dictionary and grammar to help him."

"But why do you not have a master?" asked Irene.

"Because I am too poor," he answered simply. "I suppose the fact of the Germans possessing so good a library here, explains why the shops are so poor in German books, and why they are so very dear."

"Have you studied English?" asked Mrs. Dalzell.

"Yes, in the same way. I have wished continually to know some English—and now I have found them," said Leone, with a look at Irene.

"Yes, the signora is quite English," she replied, never supposing, for an instant, he could mean herself, till Mrs. Dalzell said, laughingly—

"The signorina thinks herself 'quite' Italian."

"I!" cried Irene, colouring with displeasure at the

idea that any one could think her otherwise—"I am Roman—we were born here."

"You speak like a true Roman, which I daresay you have found out that I am not," replied Leone, entertained by the indignant manner in which she spoke; "but Signora Cecchi told me your father was English."

"My mother was Italian—from *il Regno;* she came from Sora."

"Ah!" said Leone, perceiving now why Irene had a cast of feature which, though entirely foreign, was quite unlike the low-browed, dark-eyed, glowing Roman women—"Sora—it has always been celebrated for its beautiful women."

"Ah! you should have seen mamma's picture," said Irene. "Papa painted her before they married, when she still wore the Sora dress. She left it off when she came here, because people looked at her so much, but sometimes she put it on again to please him."

"You have the portrait, of course?"

"No," answered Irene, sadly.

"What has become of it?"

"It was sold when we were poor," she answered, tears filling her eyes.

"Forgive me, signorina," said Leone, earnestly, and distressed at having called up painful recollections.

"Oh, there is nothing to forgive; if I think of it now, it is only to be grateful to the dear signora, who came and helped us," said Irene, clasping and kissing Mrs. Dalzell's hand, in pretty southern gratitude; "she is so good—so good to us!"

"Would it be impossible to recover that picture?" said Mrs. Dalzell, smiling but embarrassed, like a true Englishwoman as she was. Leone's face repeated the question.

"Oh, I think so. I do not know who bought it; it went to the Monte—it ought to have sold for a great deal of money, Vincenzo said. Papa's name was in one corner—Vincent Moore—and the date. All our pretty sketches went too, and Vincenzo's frames! We ate them all up, as Nanna says; and at last we had nothing left to eat except Tevere! I really think we must have eaten him too, if the signora had not come."

To prevent any more gratitude, Mrs. Dalzell asked if there were not magnificent libraries in Rome; she had heard of one at the Minerva.

"There are, but they are not open to ladies."

"No; but I was thinking of you."

"Nor to me. To read there, you must have a permission from your confessor, and if he fancies that you have liberal views—or—or—in short, are not convinced that all things at Rome are perfection, you will wait long before you enter those libraries."

"And you do not think so, signor?"

"Oh, signora! what an English question!" said Irene.

"I am not afraid to say what I think," replied Nota, smiling. "I compare our Government with those of other countries, and I see that we are three centuries behind the rest of the world; I see foreigners sharing Italy amongst them, and a privileged class taking all to itself; I see sacred names and noble offices abused by hypocrites and their tools, and turned to base and

selfish ends. No, I am not contented — I am not likely to think Rome perfection," he concluded, vehemently. "If you knew our history; if you could imagine how utterly oppressed every one is who is so much as suspected of a spark of patriotism—how the tyranny round us eats into our very souls—surrounds us like one slow, ceaseless fall of burning snow, as in Dante's Vision—you would not need to ask me such a question."

"Oh, signor, what rash words!" said Irene, looking round with a startled glance.

"It seems to me that you are at least not afraid to speak what you think," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"I am speaking to an Englishwoman, who knows what freedom is; I am not afraid of my words being used against me," answered Nota; "but, if need were, there is not a priest in Rome before whom I would not say the same."

CHAPTER VII.

Mournfully
He raised his looks, and met the virgin's eye.
Whoe'er thou art, look back, when on thy tame
Expanse of life first flashed love's heavenly flame,
And own the date the holy kalend took,
Rose from the worship kindled in a look.

BULWER.

LEONE NOTA kept his promise; he speedily came to pay Madama Cecchi a visit, and when she learnt that Mrs. Dalzell had given permission to introduce him to Vincenzo, she was delighted to do so. An odd kind of dread that she should be held responsible if anything happened—if Leone and Irene fell in love, for instance—or if any other disaster occurred, had made

her obdurate to his former entreaties, that she would present him to the brother and sister, of whom she was continually talking.

Leone stood on the highest pinnacle of her good graces; one reason was that he, when fortune had frowned upon "Nino," had been one of the few who stood steadily by him. He had a post in the *Dateria* which enabled him to live, but gave him very few means of indulging his natural love of study. His boyhood had been passed in a little country village, where newspapers and books were nearly unknown. The only new introductions in that line were his own purchases, and money was as scarce with him as were books. A convent library, where, by the favour of an old priest, he was allowed to read, was his chief resource, and it afforded just food enough to make him crave for more. When circumstances had caused his family to remove to Rome, he received the change as a Heaven-sent opportunity of entering the scientific and literary world of which he had dreamed. He found himself mistaken: the kind of society which he had expected did not exist: encouragement to a literary aspirant—especially to one of his turn—was small indeed; the censorship was quick to see the liberal through the poet. But Leone was not so easily disposed of. He saw and felt such evil, such miserable oppression around him, as drove weaker men into dumb despair, but only impelled his own gentle and sensitive, but brave and fervid, nature, into one life-long resistance — one fearless, wrathful protest, already not without effect, though men knew not whence came those trenchant, noble words, which amazed ears accustomed to courtly phrases, or, at the utmost, to sighs smothered lest they should offend

those who caused them. Mrs. Dalzell little knew whom she had got hold of in Leone Nota! Cecchi could have told her, but he knew well that in all places, especially at Rome, if "speech is silvern, silence is golden," and said nothing.

To Vincenzo the acquaintance was a great event; it gave him a new interest, and connected him with the outer world; and Leone's views, Leone's sentiments towards the present, and hopes for the future, soon engrossed him, almost as much as they did Nota himself. Vincenzo instinctively perceived that they were wider, truer, nobler than those of Cecchi, and began to realize that there was something possible between Slavery and Red Republicanism.

Leone's chief object in making the acquaintance had been to study English; but the book was frequently thrown aside for some ardent discussion, to which Irene, if present, listened with corresponding animation; and when Nino and his wife were present, the politics talked would have made the whole *Mezzo Paradiso* (as the Roman hierarchy are called by Roman wits) stand aghast. Yet it might be observed already how much less hopeful a view of the future Vincenzo took than did Nota or Cecchi. The want of health had told upon him, and while taking away the elastic hopefulness of youth had given him something of the sad philosophy of age. While Cecchi saw the bow of hope amid the mists and storms of revolution, and Leone trusted fearlessly to gradual reform, Vincenzo, with his calmer temperament and perhaps deeper insight, saw that the first step towards change would probably bring down existing institutions in ruins on their heads; but Vincenzo, though he might have spoken words wise and weighty,

was not the man for that time. Rome wanted one who could utter a song of rapture and suffering, such as rang from the lips of Leone—from the soul of the young improvisatore—the poet who had "learnt in suffering what he taught in song!"

Vincenzo, for a long while, knew as little as did Mrs. Dalzell that his friend was the author of those stirring poems which were passed from hand to hand, and read with eagerness, wonder, or indignation, according to the opinions of those who read them. It was too serious a matter to be lightly owned. He only felt that with Leone came new interests, fresh thoughts, sunshine enough to brighten his whole day; and he assured him that he could not come too often. Nearly every evening found Leone sitting by the couch, talking or studying English. Irene was generally at this time with Mrs. Dalzell, who thought the studies would get on just as well without her, though she did not invariably keep her away. Nota, therefore, had become thoroughly intimate with the brother, while he, comparatively, hardly knew the sister; but an unexpected event made them real friends.

It came to pass that Irene, entering her own room one day, after a morning spent over her music with Madame Marriotti, found a bouquet on her table, tied with so handsome a ribbon that it was plain the flowers were a mere pretext for sending a more valuable gift. She looked at it in wonder and admiration, without perceiving Nanna, who, chuckling, watched her from a corner; then, suddenly catching up the flowers, she ran into the sitting-room too fast to hear Nanna's hasty call. "Vincenzo," she began, breathlessly; but he was not there—a headache had prevented his rising to

breakfast, and, doubtless, still kept him prisoner. Disappointed, and afraid to disturb him, she slowly untied the flowers, admiring the ribbon, and marvelling from whence it came. She had so entirely forgotten Count Clementi that she never thought of him; indeed she believed him still absent; and though Nanna had given several mysterious hints of late, she had heeded them little. The rose-coloured band signified love, as she knew very well. Loosed from their confinement, the flowers separated, and a note fell to the ground. She lifted it in haste, and looked at it, hesitating and colouring. Raising her eyes, she found those of Leone Nota fixed upon her in reproach.

"I know nothing about it!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"Pardon me, signorina," he answered, coldly, "I merely came to see your brother, and regret to find him so unwell. I will not intrude on you longer."

"Stay!" she exclaimed, forgetting the breach of etiquette which she committed in remaining alone with one who was no relation—"You are not to fancy what you now do. I found these flowers in my room; I do not know who sent them."

"Doubtless your maid does, signorina," replied Leone; and his look and tone were so bitter and scornful, that Irene lifted her head proudly and said, "Believe or not, as you please; I am in no way obliged to explain to you; but I did not wish my brother's friend to think ill of me."

"I believe in Vincenzo's sister, and I believe in Irene," said Leone, with the rare and sweet smile which gave a wonderful charm to his thoughtful countenance; "it was not of you that I was thinking,

but of another. Do you recollect, at our first meeting, I told you one of my sisters was a nun of the *Battestine* —a most austere order? Shall I tell you her history? She came home from Sta. Rufina at sixteen. My mother was ill, and had entire confidence in her *cameriera;* Esmeralda, my sister, had a dreary life; I was little at home. She made acquaintance, I know not how, with one of the Fori family. He bribed the maid, and she carried notes and messages, and let them meet in the garden. It was all discovered. The Fori are rich and powerful; they were furious. To save my sister's good name, my mother sent her back to the convent, and told the world that she had gone by her own desire for a few weeks of religious exercise. No one doubted: nothing was more likely. The Fori speedily provided young Ignazio with a wife, and then Esmeralda returned home. Poor child! she had believed his love was as true as her own; this was as death to her. She fell ill—recovered as if by miracle, and declared that Heaven called her to enter the *Battestine.* My mother knelt to her to dissuade her; all in vain; so we lost her. Ah, signorina! if you could but imagine how sweet a creature she was, and to think that this should be the end!"

"And may you see her now?" asked Irene, much touched by this sad story.

"Once every four months; but what is that? When I have told her how I am, and how my sister Assunta is, what more is there to say? I cannot talk to her of the world," said Leone, in a tone of intense bitterness.

"But—she is happy, is she not?" asked Irene, half consolingly, half inquiringly.

"How can I tell? Do you suppose that she can tell me that, or that she had any real vocation? Grant she is happy now—she is a child—she has a child's enthusiasm—how will it be when she is old, and feels the want of something to fill her heart? But she will not live to be old; no nun does in a rigid order such as hers."

"May she write to you?"

"Yes; but at present the abbess sees what she writes. When she is 'confirmed in her vocation,' as they say, that will not be necessary," answered Leone, in a peculiar, low, sarcastic tone.

"The *Battestine*," repeated Irene; "I wonder I have never heard of them."

"It is not wonderful; there are but two convents of them. The order was founded nearly a hundred years ago, by a lady who intended to have three; one here, one at Genoa, one at Naples. The Neapolitans did not fancy so strict a rule, or she died too soon—I forget which; the convent there was never built. I only wonder that Esmeralda was content with the *Battestine*, and did not enter the *Sepolte Vive*."

"Ah!" said Irene, with a shudder. "Here, at least, you may see her sometimes."

"Yes, and also Assunta can; but if Assunta has children, Esmeralda will not be permitted to see them. No, nothing—nothing—nothing on earth," he exclaimed, emphasizing each repetition, "shall make me believe that such a severance of all ties can be pleasing to Him who made them; and never will society be pure where marriage is systematically disparaged."

"I could not leave Vincenzo, I am afraid," said Irene, as if she felt that she were wrong.

"Why should you? Believe no one who could tempt you to desert him. Who has a right to break those ties which Heaven has made? But you are a Protestant," he added, almost with satisfaction.

"You do not think ill of us for that, then?" said Irene, smiling with pleasure; for she knew how differently most of her fellow-countrymen regarded those whom they necessarily considered as under the excommunication of the Church.

He smiled too, and asked, "May I know what you are going to do with that fine present?"

Irene had fairly forgotten it, and started as his words recalled it to her. "Nanna must have brought it; I shall tie it up and make her take it back; will not that be best?"

"Do not trust her, however much she may love you, signorina."

"Oh, indeed, she is true to us; she would die for us."

"Yet she has tried to lead you into peril to-day, Signorina Irene."

She felt the truth of this, and hesitated. "Signorina," said Leone, earnestly, "I speak too plainly perhaps, but let me do so this once. Trust honour to no one; guard it yourself and ask no counsel. There are few *cameriere* who can resist gold, and he who sent these flowers is doubtless rich."

"No—I think not," answered Irene, the thought of Count Clementi flashing on her mind. Leone looked confounded. She saw it, and added, "Now, I think I know who sent them; I have twice seen him, but I do not know him, nor wish to know him—it was an evil face."

"Oh!" said Leone drawing a deep breath of relief. "I was a fool to doubt you."

"Did you?" said Irene, with her brilliant smile. "And you thought that I should have brought the flowers into our public sitting-room, for all the world to see—Signor Nota!"

"I shall never doubt again," he answered, looking earnestly at her, and thinking, for the first time, that she had a very charming face. "And now I must go to my work."

"*A rivederla, signor*," said Irene, gaily; and she carried back the flowers to her room, tied them up, and put the note safely between them, before she called Nanna, who came mysterious and eager. Her eye lit at once on the nosegay. "What, darling, have you not untied it yet? Don't you want to know who sent you such a beautiful present?"

"No, Nanna; don't you remember I told you the other day not to talk nonsense to me?"

"A fine, generous signor," continued the old woman, opening her hand a little way, and showing a little gold coin. "See what he gave the old nurse for love of her pretty mistress."

The warning of Nota returned forcibly to Irene's mind. "Nanna," she said, "I thought you loved me, and yet you want to make me do what would lose a girl her good name, and get her sent to a convent. Listen to me. You are to take this nosegay back to whoever sent it; I do not wish to know anything about it, and never say a word to me of him again."

"Am I to drive the poor signor to despair, cruel child? Not one little kind word for him? He is a noble, he is no common man; I can tell you, he loves

the air you breathe; he is distracted with love, till he knows no more what he does than a fly without a head. Do you never mean to marry? Youth fades like a flower, and who will pluck it when it is withered?"

"Oh yes, I mean to marry, and you may tell him whom," answered Irene, malice lighting up eye and lip.

"*Per Bacco!* who is it? Tell me, core of my heart."

"Rossini," answered Irene, running away and humming the first bars of *Una voce poco fa.* Turning back, however, she said, seriously, "Recollect, Nanna, I am in earnest; and another time I must tell Signora Dalzell."

In spite of all the English lady had done for them, Nanna hated and feared her. Obsequious to her face, she scowled at her the moment she could do so unseen. On the heretic stranger depended Irene's fortune; she had gold, therefore she must be coaxed and flattered; but she was English and a "schismatic," and Nanna's opinion as to her destiny in the next world was more clear than charitable. Irene's threat compelled the old woman to obedience, but she felt deeply injured at the chance of other *scudi* being cut off; she considered herself deprived of a certain income due to her, and therefore softened the refusal of the flowers, and gave hopes for the future, in a way her young mistress had little intended.

After this day Irene and young Nota were excellent friends. Her head was full of her music, and at friendship she stopped; but Leone's feelings gradually became of a more ardent nature. He had never known any girl intimately before; domestic life, like that of Irene and Vincenzo, was new to him, and their mutual

love had struck him as singularly beautiful, long before he discovered that Irene was bewitching.

The three were sitting together one evening, with Madama Cecchi as chaperone, all playing at the game of *Briscola*, which tradition says was invented by four mutes. It is played entirely by signs, a lifted finger signifying one card, a glance another; and as the object is for each partner to communicate to the other what cards are in his hand, without giving the two adversaries time to perceive the gesture, the signs are so momentary, and so comic, that none but Italians, with their eloquent features and fingers, could play at it. The laughter was at its height, and the four Italian voices were making as much noise as eight English ones, when the door opened, and the little dark face of Madame Marriotti looked in.

"Oh," said she, surveying the mirthful party with her glittering black eyes, "Oh—you are busy, I see—I don't wish to disturb you," and she vanished.

"Mrs. Dalzell," said she, returning to her friend's sitting-room, seating herself on the sofa, and deliberately folding her hands, "are you in your senses?"

"I hope so," replied the other lady, smiling. "Why?"

"Why!" repeated Madame Marriotti, growing more excited. "Why, do you ask? Because—of course *I* am no judge of such matters; you know best, no doubt, but one would think not. Why?—Why, because you let that young Nota come here whenever he pleases, and Irene in the house!"

"My dear madame, he comes to see Vincenzo. You cannot think how much good it has done the poor boy to have a friend, and they study diligently. Irene is generally with me."

The little fairy surveyed her friend with an air of mingled pity and indignation, quite indescribable. "My dear, you are not fit to have the care of an Italian girl, and that is the truth. Do you know that, keep them watched as you will, they manage to receive messages, and fall in love? Do you suppose that young man sees any other girl, without mother or aunt present, as he does Irene? What can they do but fall in love? And I hoped great things of her; I really thought she would do me credit. Now her head will be turned, and farewell music! Hush!"

Irene entered at the moment, the laughing look still on her face. Mrs. Dalzell asked what she had been doing.

"Oh, such a game at briscola! Leone and I won quite a heap of comfits. And Madama Cecchi has been telling us about a wedding that there is to be in the palace. The daughter of that Maestro di Canto is to marry the son of Professor Negri; their windows are opposite, so they used to see each other, and fell in love. She is a friend of both families, and found out all about the bride's dowry from Professor Negri."

"And probably it was his son whom I met on the stairs, carrying a nosegay of magnificent flowers, no doubt for his *sposa*," said Madame Marriotti, looking at a camellia which Irene was wearing; "a *sposo* has a right to make such offerings, but no one else, unless father or brother."

Irene blushed crimson, but it was not on account of her camellia. She thought of other flowers; but Madame Marriotti misunderstood the blush, and looked at Mrs. Dalzell.

"What is Vincenzo doing now?" asked Mrs. Dalzell.

"He is alone; Signor Leone is gone."

"Then you shall go back to him for a little while, my dear; I want to talk to madame."

Irene ran away good humouredly. Madame Marriotti rose, peeped out, returned and exclaimed—

"Did you want to make her listen? I cannot understand your ways! At all events, you saw her colour just now?"

"What you said was surely enough—"

"Nonsense, I am never mistaken in these things. What imprudence! what extravagance! And she was really improving wonderfully—wonderfully! I never heard *'Di piacer'* better sung than by her this morning. Oh, why should she fall in love? *Oh che cosa ha questa di far l'amore! che cosa ha questa di far l'amore!"* exclaimed Madame Marriotti, in despair. Then, folding her little hands on her knee again, she sat looking straight before her, and spoke no more.

Mrs. Dalzell did not feel comfortable. She thought she had been imprudent; for though she was far from being convinced that Irene felt anything but friendship for Nota, an unwelcome idea suddenly presented itself, that his feelings towards Irene might be less tranquil, and she did not see any way out of the difficulty. All at once Madame Marriotti spoke again in most inflexible tones, such as she only assumed when her art was in question.

"Mrs. Dalzell, I took this girl as my pupil to oblige you, and because I saw she had talent and feeling for music. If she is to be a cantatrice, she must give her whole mind to it; Art is a jealous mistress, no half allegiance will do for her. Irene ought to work steadily for at least two years, and then let her try her fortune

on the stage. I say she will succeed; but mind, I will not have her for my pupil for one hour, unless she devotes herself to her art. No nonsensical love-making; I must have a thorough, earnest heart and soul."

"Perhaps it might be a happier lot if she married, and never knew what fame was."

"A happier lot!" repeated Madame Marriotti, marking each syllable with scornful emphasis. "Is that what we are sent into the world to think about? Would you have a single great name in the past, if the men who stand up in it as beacons to all ages had thought about a happy lot? Besides, that girl could not settle down quietly; tame domestic life is not for such as she; she might be satisfied for a time, but soon the void would be felt; she has had a glimpse of the promised land; don't suppose she will forget it."

"Perhaps you are right," said Mrs. Dalzell, rather sadly; "but if the poor child really cares for Nota, what is to be done? I can't deprive Vincenzo of his friend."

"If there is any good in the young man, he will see that he ought not to interfere with Irene's vocation," said Madame Marriotti, emphatically.

"You must suppose him to be very fond of music indeed, dear madame!"

"At all events, let him, if he dare, speak a word of love to her as long as she is my pupil. I tell you, on my honour, that if he should, I give her up. She may choose between me and him."

"Shall I tell him this?"

"If you like.—Much good that will do—she thinks she is in England, no doubt," said Madame Marriotti, in an audible soliloquy.

The effect of this conversation was, that Mrs. Dalzell had very little sleep that night, and therefore had ample time to consider her measures. The first was to ask Leone to tea.

Hitherto she had had no anxieties or difficulties with her *protégés*, since Irene's career had been decided; this threatened to be a serious perplexity. On one side, she thought that a real attachment was a shield against many perils both for man and woman, and in her heart she did not like Irene's destination; no Englishwoman could thoroughly approve it. On the other, she could not but feel that Irene in a certain way belonged to Madame Marriotti, and that it might be a fatal mistake to cage the wild bird, whom nature intended for far and lofty flight; but it was by no means certain that Nota would take the same view. She anticipated the conversation uneasily, and plunged into the midst of it, when Leone arrived on the appointed evening. It is to be feared she was thoughtless on this occasion; she entirely forgot that tea was a beverage of which Italians know nothing. Strong black coffee would have been much more familiar to Leone, who probably associated tea with a cold, for which he might have taken a cup; but something more interesting than either coffee or tea occupied his thoughts; he looked round the room as if he expected to see some one besides his hostess, and glanced so often towards the door that she had a fair excuse for saying, "You are condemned to a *tête-à-tête* evening with me, Signor Nota."

"I am but too much honoured," said Leone, bowing low, and using, as she did, the convenient French; "where madame is—"

"Yet I think there was some one else whom you

wished to see," interrupted Mrs. Dalzell, who never could accustom herself to receive or return the compliments which an Italian would have taken as mere matters of form, just as an Englishman does "My dear," at the beginning of a letter.

Leone looked disconcerted, though he knew that no rudeness could be intended; but it was one of the cases where an Italian feels the abrupt English speaker to be "without education," as he would express it.

"Will you excuse a very plain question?" continued Mrs. Dalzell. "Do you come here for Vincenzo's sake or for Irene's?"

"I came for Vincenzo's; I do so still, but now for Irene's also," replied Leone, candidly, but looking at her with anxiety.

"Thank you; it was a disagreeable question to ask, and perhaps you think I had no right to ask it; but—"

"Madame has every right where Signorina Irene is concerned."

"I will tell you what induced me to do so. Madame Marriotti has been very kind in teaching Irene; it is of inestimable value to Irene to have her instructions, and her name will give any pupil a certain prestige, as of course you know. She says that Irene has great powers, and I think you will agree with me, that we owe her some gratitude for the pains she has taken in teaching her."

"And therefore, madame—"

"Therefore Irene must show it in the only way she can: by studying in earnest. I am afraid, if she guesses what you have just told me, she will have many distractions from her music."

"You cannot suppose, signora, that a word has passed between us," began Leone, impetuously.

"No, indeed; but it is of the future that I am thinking. Could you maintain a wife?"

"I am poor, but I must rise in my business, unless—" A sudden cloud came over his face, as if some unwelcome idea had occurred to him, and he shaded his face with his hand.

"Well, but first there is another consideration. Irene is ambitious; do you suppose she would be contented to lead a quiet life, or even be a *prima donna* here? This is a very small corner of the world to satisfy a great cantatrice. Listen one moment longer: she is too young to make any decision yet; I could not let her pledge herself in any way for several years to come, though I confess that, when she is a little older, I would gladly see her your wife; in consideration of which you must forgive all the unpleasant things I am saying, Signor Nota. Madame Marriotti says that the only condition on which she will continue to teach her is, that no disturbing notions are suggested to her by you; and I ask, how are we to manage if you meet constantly?"

"You are right, madame; and if you knew all, you would say I have no right to link any one's fate to mine. I come here no more."

"Nay, that is the last thing I wish. What is Vincenzo to do without his friend?"

"And what am I to do?" broke in Leone, with sudden passion. "You think nothing of the torture to which you would subject me. Am I to meet Irene daily, and not so much as attempt to win a kind look

from her, while others may seek her as they please? I could not trust myself. Better see her no more."

"I do not perceive why; but you must settle it with yourself, of course," said Mrs. Dalzell, quietly. "If you really cannot trust yourself, so much the worse; I was mistaken in you; but I cannot believe it. Surely, for her sake (I dare say you are going to tell me you would die for it); well, then, cannot you make the sacrifice of being only a friend to her for the next two years? Consider, Irene might one day reproach you if you interfered with what seems her vocation, when she is too young to be really able to judge for herself. It is for her good that I ask this; and I give you my full leave to speak after her musical education shall have been completed. You say you still come here for Vincenzo's sake; have you any right to deprive him of your friendship? Come, Signor Nota, I trust you; don't tell me you cannot trust yourself, unless you would have me think you are unworthy of Irene."

Leone's vehemence had vanished under the influence of her composure; he sank into a reverie, from which the cessation of her voice roused him.

"Madame," he said, "you are putting me to a hard trial, but you honour me by much trust. It is more than probable that, if you knew my history, you would be still less willing to give Irene to me. At all events, I promise that while she is Madame Marriotti's pupil she shall never guess, from word or look, so far as I can help it, what are my feelings towards her. Two years will alter many things here, for good or for evil."

"I thank you once more," said Mrs. Dalzell, much pleased, though she was not quite quixotic enough to

believe that he could control looks as well as words, and rather perplexed by the mystery in what he had said. "I am certain you will keep your word. And now tell me something about yourself; Madama Cecchi has told me a good deal, but I am not sure that I understand what you could have meant just now."

"Perhaps not," answered Leone, with a slight smile, feeling how impossible it would be for an Englishwoman, unversed in Italian politics, to realise in the least how precarious was the position of any man in Rome who had made himself in any way obnoxious to the Government. "If I told you that I live on the edge of a precipice, and that an instant may cast me into the gulf below, what would you think? Listen with incredulity, or imagine me guilty of some enormous crime?"

"Not that, at all events," replied Mrs. Dalzell, looking smilingly at his singularly attractive countenance.

Leone paused and considered. How was he to make her comprehend the necessity of entire secrecy? Suddenly making up his mind, he began his story; one simple enough; his fortune so small, and his prospects, as far as wealth went, so distant, that Mrs. Dalzell, listening with much interest, wondered, in silence, whether they would satisfy Irene, who, as she had rightly judged, was ambitious; but she always felt, when speculating upon what Irene would do or think, as if she had a foreign bird in her possession, of brilliant hues, unknown notes, and habits altogether different from those of quiet English ones. Perhaps Irene might, after all, think a home, and the affection of such a man as Nota, more attractive than fame. Mrs. Dalzell thought there

was no comparison between them; but then, she was no longer very young, nor a musician, nor an Italian. She was much surprised by Leone's entire submission, for she was not aware of the enormous authority of parents and guardians in Italy, and Leone naturally felt that it would be ungrateful, indeed, to deny her right to dispose of Irene.

Mrs. Dalzell derived one great satisfaction from this conversation—the conviction that Leone was worthy of Irene; she liked him thoroughly—so thoroughly that she would not be discomposed by the dissatisfaction of Madame Marriotti, when told of the kind of compact that had been formed. She was quite incredulous that Nota would keep his word; or, even granting that such a miracle should occur, that Irene would not fall in love unasked; and she listened disdainfully to Mrs. Dalzell's assertion, that girls were quite capable of feeling nothing but friendship. That might be all very true among the icy northern nations, Madame Marriotti said; it was another matter in Italy, where men choose their wives by a pretty face, or else for a dowry. Two looks were enough. Did Mrs. Dalzell suppose that young wretch and Irene could meet daily with impunity?

"Yet I do not call Irene pretty," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"She is fascinating: you will see how she will be worshipped. Well, you know my mind on this matter, so take your chance."

"I trust them both," replied Mrs. Dalzell; and though Madame Marriotti did not perceive the full force of the reply, she held her peace; for in her advancing age, and the loneliness which, in spite of many friends, necessarily closed round one who had no

family, she could not afford to lose the scholar, of whom she was secretly very proud, and whom she loved, perhaps, more than she was aware.

CHAPTER VIII.

But ever and anon of griefs subdued
There comes a token like a serpent's sting.
Childe Harold.

COMING one day unexpectedly into Vincenzo's sitting-room, Mrs. Dalzell was struck by the utter despondency of his look and attitude. The engraving of St. Michael stood on a desk near him, and the half-finished carving beside it; but he had not touched it for many minutes. He was lying on his sofa, one hand half hidden in his thick black hair, and supporting his white and wasted forehead, while his lustrous eyes shone as if lighted from within. His look was more than melancholy, it was bitter; and Mrs. Dalzell's countenance grew almost as sad as she watched him. She sat down, and remarked that the carving was improving.

"Yes," he answered carelessly, as if the subject did not interest him.

"Where is Irene?"

"With Madame Marriotti, of course."

"What is the objection, Vincenzo?"

"None, that I know of."

"Except that you think that she does not want you as much as she did formerly."

"No one wants me," he answered, turning away his head; "I am of no use to any one on earth."

"Mrs. Dalzell made no answer. He looked up hastily to see the reason of her silence; her face was

full of compassion, and he resumed, as if, now that he had begun, all the flood of pent-up bitterness must have way. "Irene has her music, she is happy; she has a future to look to, while I lie here with this room for my world, and not a single object in life. Each day the same story—at war with myself, and with less strength every hour for the fight. What have I done that I should be turned into a cripple, a burden to every one? Is it for any fault of mine or of my father, or can a miserable, weary existence like this be pleasing to Heaven? I cannot live without hope. I cannot cheat myself into cheerfulness; I am growing bitter and despairing. I have grown even jealous of my sister, the poor child! But you cannot understand all this."

"My dear boy, I can, for I have felt it."

Vincenzo looked up in wonder at that kind, calm face. He could not believe that Mrs. Dalzell had ever experienced the hard sceptical despair that gnawed his own heart.

"You shall hear something of my history, Vincenzo. I was an only child, the heiress of two families; perhaps there never was a girl more indulged or more happy than I was; and my marriage only gave me another home, happier still, if possible. My husband was an officer in the Indian army, at home on leave; when it expired, we went out to India, and there I had two children. We had to send them home in a few years, and I was parted from them—that was my only sorrow, till my health failed, and I was ordered back to England. There was my old home ready to take me in; my dear mother was then alive. We all lived together, she and I and the boys. It was a house on

the sea-coast. One day—a bright summer's day it was—my eldest boy went on the water with three more, as gay as himself. I stood on the balcony to see them start; he was standing up, waving his cap to me. No one ever knew how it chanced, but the boat capsized—three were saved, and one was drowned—that was my son. His brother was a delicate boy, an invalid like you; you have many times reminded me of him. He lived till two years ago, and then drooped and died. I knew months before how it must be, and no one can tell how the thought haunted me, How am I to answer their father when he asks for his boys? but I need not have dwelt on that; he never came back to ask for them."

Her voice died away, and a deadly paleness settled on her face. Vincenzo murmured, "Killed in the Indian wars?"

"We heard nothing for months; then came a rumour that he had been seen up the country, but he did not write—no, I knew he was dead; I had no hope; and yet that waiting time was the hardest trial of all. We had certain news at last—he had died of fever, with no one near him, but his native servant. That is my history, Vincenzo. And yet," she added, after a long pause, "I have found comfort and peace. At first—O Vincenzo! nothing that you feel can equal what I felt, undisciplined as I was. Even now I dare not think of it. There was one thought—the only one that really came home to me, when my troubles were made quite intolerable by the miserable feeling that I learnt from them only doubt and despair—it was, that for a moment, our Lord found His cross too heavy to bear, and I hoped that this might have been in

order to bid such as I am to take comfort, and hope to be helped, even though we should sink under ours. I came abroad at last, because my friends said I ought; I cared little about it, but the change did me good, and here I found an interest that has made life welcome to me again."

"Thank you, signora," said Vincenzo, with a grateful look.

"I see you are thinking that other people having heavy trials does not lighten yours, Vincenzo; but I told you my history, because I think I can see now what a year ago was all mystery to me, namely, why these trials came. You will know, sooner or later, why it is your lot to be a cripple, instead of an active man; and meanwhile comfort yourself with thinking that he who bears such a fate bravely, is as great as a martyr —would have dared to be a martyr, had he lived in the old days. Why pain and evil exist, we cannot tell; but we can very often wrest a blessing from them. One word about Irene—surely it is a sickly fancy that she loves you less—is it not to you that she turns for sympathy in everything? If she were to come in at this moment, it would be to you, not me, that she would tell the history of her morning."

"How long shall I have her, signora? I can see that it is Irene, not Vincenzo, whom Nota seeks."

"He will not steal her yet, and I think you owe him some gratitude. You must make him tell you his history." Mrs. Dalzell repeated as much of what had passed between herself and Leone, as she could without breach of confidence, and Vincenzo listened with much interest, saying, when she had ended, "I would

gladly give her to him, but what shall I be to her then?"

"Always her brother, Vincenzo. I don't say, do not set your heart upon her, for I know that the human mind, to be in a healthy state, must have a future for itself or for some one else to look forward to; but you will yet have many interests, if my experience is that of other people. And for yourself—you ought not to think your carving nothing; it may not be as grand as what you had formerly imagined; but it is very beautiful, and you are a true artist."

"Few artists have had as good fortune as I," said Vincenzo, taking up his tools again. "Even this is bespoken already. Did you see the gentleman who came to look at it? Leone says it is successful. What shall I do when you are gone, signora?"

"I hope to come back next winter, you know, and meanwhile you must take care of Irene. You are the only person who can really guard her, for I don't trust old Nanna. I told you about Leone, because you had a right to know. You are Irene's real guardian, young as you are."

"I have grown old of late, signora."

"Yes, perhaps that is true; and I must say it is fortunate that a girl, with such dangerous gifts as Irene's, has a wise brother to take care of her."

"Who could not get into mischief if he would," said Vincenzo, once more speaking gaily, but stealing a marvelling look at Mrs. Dalzell, as if he could not credit that one so uniformly cheerful, could have passed through such heavy trials. He thought long on the subject, trying to realize from whence came the strength to bear them. He was interrupted by a visitor.

While Vincenzo and Mrs. Dalzell were talking, Irene had come back from her morning's lesson with Madame Marriotti, and had found on her table once more a bunch of flowers crowned by a bit of *finocchio*, or fennel, which it is the custom in Rome, at one particular time of the year, for friends and lovers to exchange; each gathering a new piece daily for six weeks, as during all that time a fresh branch must be forthcoming wherever and whenever demanded, and a ring, a bracelet, or some little gift is the penalty for allowing it to wither. Of course the exchange implies considerable intimacy, and Irene was doubly indignant, first at the presumption of the sender, and secondly at Nanna's evident treachery. Nanna was not far off, but hesitated to appear. Irene called her in peremptory tones.

"Nanna, what did you say when you took back those other flowers?"

"Say! what you told me, my darling; but the poor signor was so broken-hearted—fit to throw himself into the river—he weeps like a cut vine at your cruelty. I cannot stir out but he sees me, and beseeches me for news of you; what could I do? There is no harm in flowers—he knows you love flowers."

"It is of no use to talk to you," said Irene, whose anger turned into amusement, as Nanna grew more and more pathetic; "but, as Signora Dalzell says, girls who feel they are trusted *can* be trusted, and I know she never watches me, and some one else trusts me too—so there—do you see how much I care for flowers, Nanna?" and leaning from the window, she tossed them into the street below.

"Child! child! are you mad? The note and your

name!" shrieked Nanna, hurrying to stop her. It was too late. Irene stood aghast; the consequence of her imprudence flashed upon her.

"What about my name?" she asked, faintly.

"It will be in the note! and his own name too, for aught I know!" exclaimed Nanna; "any curious fellow, who finds it under the window, will make out who Irene is. See what you have done, wrong-headed child! Any other girl in Rome would have been grateful and have had a kind word for him, and for the old nurse who risked so much for her!"

"Go down and try to get it. No, it is too late; some one has picked it up, and there are at least six people at the windows as usual," said Irene, despairingly, looking at the opposite houses, where at half the windows, idlers were leaning. "I suppose they will say I threw it to him."

She leant upon the window-sill in extreme annoyance—nay, in alarm. She would be supposed to have dropped the flowers by accident, and the note would be a cause for scandal and gossip for ever. Suppose it should come to the ears of Mrs. Dalzell! Who could tell what were its contents? While she was pursuing these very unpleasant reflections, some one rang at the outer door, and an unfamiliar voice exchanged question and answer with Filomena. Irene did not notice it, for the padrona's visitors always entered by the same door; but there was a momentary look in old Nanna's face, as if it were not quite a new sound to her.

"Come, *carina*," said she, "there is no up-hill without a down-hill; everything can be mended except a broken neck; don't vex yourself; no harm will come

of it. Go to Vincenzo; you have not been near him since morning, and 'tis noon past!"

"Past twelve already!" said Irene, going away, with a slight quick gesture, as if to shake off her uneasy thoughts; and she entered the sitting-room. Vincenzo was not alone; Mrs. Dalzell still sat there, and a stranger was also present, holding the lost flowers in his hand. He looked round as Irene entered, and arose. She recognised him in an instant, though the eyes that had seemed to her black by night, now proved to be of dark clear grey, but the face was as remarkably pale as under the lights of the tapers at St. Peter's; and in the finely cut lips, shaded by a slender black moustache, there was the same expression that had made her previously dislike it, and call it an evil face. She stood confounded at seeing him sitting there with the nosegay in his hand, but she did not betray the thoughts that flashed through her mind; and her countenance expressed nothing but surprise and a little haughtiness, as Vincenzo said, "Count Pierfrancesco Clementi has done us the kindness of restoring some flowers which you dropped, Irene."

"I had the good fortune to pass as they fell," said Clementi, in singularly musical tones; "I perceived that they had been dropped by accident, and, looking up, I recognised their owner. Twice, as I was just telling your brother, I have had the pleasure of seeing you before; and, knowing that we were neighbours, and, moreover, possess at least one mutual acquaintance, I ventured to restore them myself."

Irene took the bouquet. She could hardly believe her suspicions to be just; for, though this might be a mere pretext for making an acquaintance, he surely

would not have run the risk of Vincenzo's demanding whence the flowers came. Her first impulse was to say that she had thrown them away on purpose; but Nanna had brought her up, and such teaching had not been quite without effect, though Irene was naturally thoroughly frank. An instinct of fear, of distrust, kept her back; she was uncertain what would be the consequences of such a course; but her thanks were brief, and she rang the bell for Nanna, and watched her closely when she entered. Clementi looked up as the door opened, but perfect indifference reigned on his face, when he saw only an old servant; and he resumed his conversation with Vincenzo. Irene held out the flowers to Nanna, saying, low, "Here they are; take them back—do you understand?"

"Yes, yes, my darling—who is that? did he bring them?" asked the old woman, peering curiously at Clementi.

"I think you might know, Nanna."

"I? is he not a stranger? Tell me, *figlia*."

"Our neighbour, the contessa's son. Take those horrible flowers away, Nanna."

"Why, Irene, you are not sending your flowers away?" said Vincenzo. "Where did you get them?"

"Perhaps the scent is too strong; I think the sender must have been English," said Count Clementi; "a Roman would have known better; I perceived that the odour was too powerful, and, perhaps, after all, it was not dropped, signorina, but thrown away?"

"Yes, it was, signor," replied Irene, lifting her eyes to his; but she could not read his face, only she felt there was something hidden under the mask of polite indifference.

"Poor Leone!" said Vincenzo, smiling; "I suspect it was a Roman, after all, who sent them; but Count Clementi will not betray how you treated his gift."

"Is the signor a friend of Leone?" asked Irene, with surprise.

"I can hardly claim that honour, though an honour I should esteem it, but we are, at least, acquaintances, though our opinions differ—" he cast a glance of an instant on the books on the table; "and I have, hitherto, had no opportunity of knowing which may be in the right, he or I."

"That cannot be Leone's fault; he is frank enough; he has his opinions written on his face," said Vincenzo, smiling, and alluding to the beard which had become at that time a sort of party sign, and was sufficient to mark all who wore it as *mauvais sujets* in the eyes of the Government.

"He has nothing to lose," said Clementi, in a tone so quiet that the sneer was hardly perceptible; but it stung Irene, who answered, with a blush of displeasure, "Every man has his liberty to lose. I only wish Signor Nota had more to peril, that every one might see how exactly he would still speak and think as he now does."

Mrs. Dalzell smiled, and Vincenzo said, as if in apology for Irene's warmth, "My sister will never hear a word against an absent friend."

"I no longer think that Nota has nothing to lose, since he possesses such an advocate; but, signorina, you must not judge too harshly those who hold opinions contrary to your own. I was brought up by my uncle, whose name you doubtless know [a suppressed smile flitted over Vincenzo's face, as he thought of the tor-

rents of abuse he had heard Cecchi pour on that uncle]; all my feelings ought to be, yes, *ought* to be engaged on the ruling side. I am, by birth and education, a *Papista*, as you would say; though I have taken no part in politics, and really know little about them."

"In fact, you, like Irene, defend the absent," said Vincenzo.

"I must; and you may understand that, though I may feel that there is some justice in the popular outcry, I must shut my ears against it—gratitude and affection both bind me."

"And interest," thought Vincenzo; and he could not forbear adding, "Gratitude and affection have little to do with public questions."

Irene looked uneasy, and Mrs. Dalzell longed to change the subject, for even she had learned how unsafe was such talk; but Count Clementi eagerly pursued, "You are right, our country has claims superior to all others: already, unwelcome as my doubts are, I do not think exactly as I did a year ago; but you must perceive how difficult it is for me to see more than one side of the question, far more so than for you—you have means unattainable to me. This book, for instance; I have often wished to read it, but I could not get it here; I cannot imagine how you did."

"An English person lent it to me," answered Vincenzo, glad to shelter himself under that shield, and rejoiced that Leone was not the owner; for it was one so strictly prohibited, that an Italian would hardly have ventured to possess it.

"Lent—it is not yours? I must not beg for it, then?"

"You know the risk you run in taking it?"

"I don't think there is much more danger for Monsignore Clementi's nephew than for you English," replied the Count; and for once Irene did not indignantly claim to be an Italian.

He took it with an eagerness that made Vincenzo smile, and say, "I suspect you are more of a *Carbonaro* than you choose to own."

"No, not yet," replied Clementi, taking up the volume; "perhaps you may convert me. You will allow me to return this in person?"

"If you will have the charity to come and see me again," said Vincenzo, cordially; and the visitor took leave, with a mere formal farewell to Mrs. Dalzell and Irene, at whom he had looked little, and whom he had only addressed when courtesy seemed to require it. She became thoughtful as he departed, and absently answered Vincenzo's questions as to whether she liked their new acquaintance. He had perplexed her, and she did not believe that Nanna would plot against her to such an extent as must have been the case, if he were the sender of the flowers; and yet she regretted that he was to come again, and said she did not like him. And how could Vincenzo talk in such an English way?

"I am afraid I was not very prudent," he answered; "but the truth is, a new face is a treat to me. We will ask Leone about him. I never heard Cecchi say anything about the nephew; it is the uncle whom he abhors, and who, he says, maintains spies all over Rome. Fancy if we could make a convert of the count, Irene! We shall yet see him with as black a beard as Leone wears!"

"I only hope he is not a spy himself," said she,

again inclined to tell Vincenzo of her doubts, and again rejecting the idea.

"Why, he told us his opinions frankly enough; any one must know that he is a *Papista.* But he seemed ready to hear truth; he made no secret of his opinions."

"No, he made no secret of anything, and that is just what seems to me suspicious. Who talks in that way to strangers except English people?"

"Oh, he knew we were Protestants, and half English; of course, that made a difference."

"I am nothing but Italian when I think of Italy," said Irene, unconsciously assuming a manner so like that of Nota that Vincenzo could not refrain from a smiling glance at Mrs. Dalzell; but he was prudent enough to suppress the remark, that she was prejudiced by Clementi's observation on Leone.

Irene was subjected to a close examination from Nanna, when next she saw her, as to whether it really were the Signor Conte; what she thought of him, and if he were coming again; but the thought evidently underlying these questions did not increase her suspicions, since, from her babyhood, Nanna had constantly looked forward to her marriage. Mrs. Dalzell had, indeed, done a good deed in taking her out of Nanna's hands. Unscrupulous, garrulous, unprincipled, the old woman was enough to ruin any girl, and the wonder was that Irene had escaped so well; but her nurse's teaching had been greatly counteracted by her father's, who had given her the same kind of training as he had himself received in childhood from his simple, unworldly old aunt—to please him had always been a great object with her—and before she could speak plain she had

learnt that, though Nanna saw no harm in a lie, it was the one thing that "papa" would not forgive. She had been taken almost entirely out of Nanna's reach since Mrs. Dalzell had had anything to do with her, and had, unconsciously, imbibed the refinement and English principles of her kind friend, while Nanna's influence proportionably diminished.

Irene did not feel quite satisfied with herself; she wished she had told all she knew about the flowers; and when she went to Mrs. Dalzell's sitting-room to bid her good night, there was something unusual in her friend's manner which startled her, and she hastily concluded that Mrs. Dalzell was displeased with her. She began at once, "I don't think Leone sent me the flowers, signora—I do not know whence they came."

"It is of no great importance, I dare say," said Mrs. Dalzell, rather absently; "good night, my dear."

Irene was perplexed, and retired in silence, and Mrs. Dalzell pressed her hand again on her eyes with a deep sigh. Though she had spoken bravely and cheerfully to Vincenzo, his words had awakened an echo in her own heart—had recalled the anguish which she hoped was stilled or gone. She discovered, with a sort of dismay, that there it was still—the old pain—would nothing, nothing, neither change nor time, banish it? She had felt all that he described, and more—much that she shrank from recollecting. She called up all the thoughts that could calm and strengthen her, bade herself remember how similar paroxysms of mental pain had overcome her before, and had been slowly vanquished, as this would be—she would not give way now. But it was long before she could command herself sufficiently to resume any

occupation. More than an hour had passed, and still she was sitting in the same attitude, lost in sorrowful thought. A quick tap at the door startled her.

"Come in!" she said, hastily brushing away the traces of tears and taking up her work, and the door opened, and Madama Cecchi appeared in full costume of Louis Quatorze, looking exceedingly handsome, with her hair turned back over a cushion, and powdered; strings of pearls round her neck and arms, a scarlet silk shirt, and white petticoat, and a flowing sacque of blue, trimmed with white fur.

Mrs. Dalzell looked at her wonderstruck, quite forgetting that the padrona had announced to her that she was going that night to a masked ball.

"Here I am, come to present myself to my dear signora!" said she, joyously, holding up her black silk mask. "What does she think? Am I as I should be? Does my dress please her?"

"Very handsome, indeed, and very becoming," said Mrs. Dalzell; and it was a fact that the strong contrast of hues did admirably set off the fresh and lively countenance of the Roman matron, who chanced to be fair and blue eyed, but had all the stateliness and portliness of her fellow-townswomen.

"But, signora, I thought you were *morta al mondo!*"

"Bah!" said Madama Cecchi, laughing. "So I am —I never go anywhere; I lead the life of a snail, an oyster, a coral-worm, signora! What would you have! It is to please my sister that I go to-night. Nino is going, too; I went down on my knees to persuade him; I said, 'Where will be my character, if I go without you?' and he goes. Nino! Ni! come, and let the signora see you."

Nino appeared, masked in a domino, looking so comical that Mrs. Dalzell could not help laughing.

"I wish you a pleasant evening, signor."

He shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to his wife. "It is her doing—not mine."

"Well, suppose it is! Would you live like St. Alessio, or St. Onofrio, or St. Antonio l'Abbate? Oh, these men, signora, these men! I had to break my heart before he would promise to go; he was as a flint—a rock of granite—to my entreaties. And you go nowhere, *signora mia!* You spend all your time in industry; it is a marvel to see. Come, Nino. Good night, dear signora; a most happy night to you!"

"*A rivederla—felicissima notte,*" said Cecchi, bowing, and closing the door, leaving Mrs. Dalzell smiling.

The apparition had, at all events, dispersed her sad thoughts; she was not at all inclined now to sit down and be melancholy; besides, it was full time for people who were not going to masked balls to go to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

Fidare è un buon uomo; Nontifidare è meglio.
Proverb.

When Leone next appeared, Vincenzo asked for information respecting Count Clementi. Leone, who considered Vincenzo and Irene as his own peculiar and especial friends, was far from being pleased to hear of their new acquaintance; and thought with dismay of the possibility of a rival appearing on the scene. He had little information to give, except that Clementi had of late sought his acquaintance; Cecchi, who was present, added that the count had likewise made advances to-

wards himself; and both joined in marvelling what could be the motive, since every one knew he must be a *Papista*, as the nephew of one who was known as the greatest opponent of progress and champion of old abuses in the whole Roman hierarchy, the suggester of all the new oppressive measures, and the persecutor of every one who held liberal opinions.

Many a tale of tyranny was current respecting Monsignore Clementi, who was very high in the Pope's good graces, and on the fair way to be speedily a cardinal. How the Romans hated him! Even Cecchi hardly surpassed Leone in detestation of this man, whose conduct had gone far to open the eyes of the people to the vices of existing institutions, and to destroy the hereditary reverence for age. It had oozed out that he had been the originator of an order (acted on but too thoroughly), that whenever a liberal was convicted of any offence, the utmost punishment contemplated by the law should invariably be inflicted. He was the very soul of the Sanfedists, that sect more dreaded than a band of brigands by peaceable men; that sect which, originally founded to aid the Roman Government, speedily became its master, and ruled the whole Papal States by spy, sword, and exile, a very reign of terror.

It was hard to credit that the nephew of this man, entirely dependent on him for all his prospects, could have any leaning to the liberal side, yet Cecchi and Nota were eager to believe so. It would be a triumph indeed! Cecchi thought it was possible that Clementi might be a liberal at heart, but that he hesitated to avow it, lest he should lose the good graces of his uncle; and he exhorted Vincenzo to lose no oppor-

tunity of discovering if it were so. Nota saw there must be an acquaintance, and could find no objection, except the one which he did not choose to avow. He had nothing to say against it, but he would have liked to throw Count Clementi into the Tiber.

The count appeared again in Vincenzo's sitting-room, after a sufficient time had elapsed for studying the book which he had borrowed; he carried off another, and had much talk with Vincenzo, which increased the latter's hopes not a little. One visit led to another, and sometimes Leone, sometimes Cecchi were present, till a considerable intimacy sprang up between them all. Vincenzo entirely believed in his new friend, who only very gradually yielded to his arguments, and Nota and Cecchi had both so much confidence in Vincenzo's judgment, so much calmer and cooler than their own, that they were inclined to believe whatever he asserted; but habitual caution made them slow to trust, and there were many meetings before any free expression of opinion was elicited.

Something of confidence sprang up at last, *apropos* of an article in the *Times* on the prospects of Italy. It had been copied by *Galignani*, but the police had taken care to cut it out of every copy at the libraries. Mrs. Dalzell, who happened to have the *Times* itself sent to her from England, gave the article to Irene to read, and she translated it into Italian for the benefit of Cecchi and his wife. Count Clementi and Leone came in, in the midst, and she was entreated to begin again. There were ardent glances exchanged as she read, and almost before she had concluded, Cecchi burst forth into comments and approval, and an animated discussion instantly sprang up, which soon became merged in

dreams of Italy's future, so wild, so enthusiastic, so impossible, that it seemed as if none of them had any recollection of Italy's past. Any one who had seen the party, their ardent looks, words, and gestures, Vincenzo's pale face lighted up with excitement, Irene's inspired eyes, and Madame Cecchi's impetuosity adding fuel to the flame—any who had seen how men, women, even frail invalids, joined with one heart and soul in the national cause—and these were but types of hundreds of others—must have believed that a glorious work would be done, that some new era was about to dawn.

Nota and Clementi took leave at the same time, but the count, instead of going to his own part of the palace, said he was expected at a friend's house, and accompanied Leone for a little way. They walked for some time in silence through the grass-grown piazza, where the palace cast a shadow as huge as a mountain, and into the street of the Ripetta. The moon shone in a broad track on the river, creating that lovely *tremolar dell'onde* which Dante celebrated; the plash of the fountain came refreshingly on the ear; in the warm spring night, the streets were almost as full as by day; groups continually went by, singing and conversing, and the voices seemed to rise up between the tall houses which cast their thick dark shadows on each side, as if in a mountain gorge. The count and Leone turned again into a narrow side street where was entire silence and desertion, a strange contrast to the one they had just left; and as they passed a dark archway a herd of wild dogs rushed out, without, however, attempting to attack them, and coursed full speed down the street.

Clementi was the first to speak. "We have had a strange evening," he said; "I feel as if I had been a traitor, and yet I cannot but own that young Mori had the best of the argument. What a cool, clear head he has—a thorough Englishman, I fancy."

"You mean to give him another opportunity of converting you soon," said Leone, referring to an appointment which he had heard Vincenzo and the count make as they parted.

Clementi did not reply for a moment. Then looking at Leone with a slight smile—"I am more disinterested than you; for I gain nothing, and lose much, if I take the liberal side."

"What do I gain?" asked Leone, quickly.

"What you think a high reward, my friend, such a look from Signorina Irene's dark eyes as met you this evening. Forewarned, forearmed; I waste no time in seeking love where there is none to give."

Leone was silent; for though he knew well that Irene only regarded him as a friend, it was not wonderful that he should be slow to say so, and Count Clementi's words were welcome in every way.

"Come," said Clementi, who had been reading his face with his own penetrating, inscrutable eyes, "let us meet as friends; I do not ask to know your secrets, but there is no occasion for you to *stiletto* me as your rival, which I am not, and should find it vain to seek to be, even if I could marry as I please. My prospects would be singularly diminished if I should present a heretic to my uncle! *Addio*, we part here; *addio, mio caro.*"

They parted cordially. Leone was of an unsuspicious nature, and Clementi's words removed a

weight from his mind. He had not proceeded many paces when he was joined by a friend, who came rapidly up to him, uttering his name.

"Ha! Luigi—well met!" said Nota.

"You are just in time to go with me to Casa Olivetti," said the other, passing his arm through Leone's, with a warning pressure which prevented Nota from pleading as an objection his want of acquaintance with the family. "I am on my way there." Then, in very low tones, "Have you heard that Donati has been arrested?"

"Arrested!" replied Leone, with a start of consternation, as the colour left his dark cheek.

"This morning. Beware—we are watched; don't look round. Did you see that you were followed?"

"I suspected as much. On what charge was Donati—?"

"Cerigo sent me word privately: I know little, except that political papers and copies of certain poems were found on him; and the police are all on the *qui vive* to discover the author. He denied all knowledge of them."

"Is it on those grounds?" asked Leone, with agitation.

"No, no, on my honour. They had nothing to do with the business; it was an imprudent speech on Austrian affairs, made in the Café Greco."

"Is it certain, Ravelli? Are you positive?"

"I give you my word it was. You cannot help him; don't be a madman. I tell you it was his own rashness; don't go and put your own head in the noose. Where are your copies?"

Leone touched his forehead.

"That's well; you will find that they have been searching your room. I have been watching for you ever since I had a hint of what was going on. Where have you been? Who was the man I saw with you just now?"

"Count Clementi," said Leone, unable to help smiling at the irrepressible astonishment depicted on the features of his friend—features too gay and handsome for one engaged in a conspiracy.

"Count Clementi—ah!" repeated Ravelli, aloud; then resuming his former hushed tone, "let all the police in Rome hear it, by all means. Are you certain there is nothing in your desk that can betray you? They seem to have got on the right scent, somehow."

Leone's brow was knitted. He felt that the instant of which he had spoken to Mrs. Dalzell might be near; the gulf had swallowed up one of his friends; his own turn might come next.

"Nothing—but suspicion is enough. I know their eyes have been on me this long while. Well, there are few to miss me. Poor Donati!"

"Ay—Cerigo will let me know the sentence soon—exile, I suppose; or possibly our paternal Government may be satisfied with perpetual imprisonment—not a heavy price to pay for speaking a little truth once in a way. Here we are; come in."

As they mounted the stairs of Casa Olivetti, Ravelli suddenly stopped and turned to his companion with a burst of laughter. "*Corpo di Bacco*, my friend, you chose your companion well! You could not have done better, unless you had had the uncle instead of the nephew! I hope that rascally spy who was following

you saw him! You must tell me by-and-bye how it chanced."

"Weathercock that you are, Luigi!" said Leone, smiling, but unable to shake off the impression of what he had just heard as readily as his light-hearted friend had done. "Now, how are you going to explain my presence here?"

"Easily enough," answered Ravelli, opening the door of a room wherein sat an elderly man, busy in extracting such scanty information as is afforded by the *Roman Gazette;* a lady at work, and a pretty, dark-eyed child, seated on a stool at her feet, and resting against her, while she wound a skein of silk. All three looked up with a smile of welcome, as Ravelli appeared, and Leone was received with ready cordiality when introduced as his friend. It was his first introduction to the Olivetti family; his first near view of the pretty Imelda, his friend Luigi's destined bride; but he was too much disturbed by what he had just learnt, to wish to linger at Casa Olivetti, and, staying no longer than ceremony required, he soon took his leave.

"Rather death than exile!" he muttered to himself, as he was returning to his solitary home. "Exile!" he looked round with a long gaze. "Never to see my Rome, nor to hear my own Italian! I should not, however, be alone—truly, I need not fear that; I should find fellow-exiles wherever I went; our Government has taken care of that! There is a chance of imprisonment, too. No, I should not make a Silvio Pellico—well, we shall see how it turns out."

He mounted to his own room, nearly at the top of the house. It was scantily furnished, and its only ornaments were a small bust of Dante, and an engrav-

ing from Ary Scheffer's "*Christus Consolator*." Perhaps, among those seeking consolation, in that figure holding up chained hands, Leone saw his country!

There was a view from the window worthy of a poet; a dark group of cypresses and pines stood doubly dark in the moonlight, which lit up Santa Maria Maggiore, and shone on the distant Coliseum, and cast long gleams over the Campagna. Leone was apt to spend many a night hour at that open window; but he had other more pressing thoughts just then. He looked keenly round; there was no trace of a search. Yes—a moment's inspection showed him that his bureau had been examined, his books moved; and, behold! several German works on geology, acquired with infinite difficulty, had vanished,—gone, no doubt, to bear witness against him as a student of that heretical science! A smile, at once sad, scornful, and triumphant, came to Leone's lips. He knew that after all he was stronger than any ruler; he had spoken true words, which were written on the hearts of the people; he had uttered what was stirring inarticulately in the breast of hundreds. Though his voice might be silenced in the grave, or a prison silent as the grave, those words would be remembered—he had not lived in vain. He paced rapidly up and down the room, and then stopped and looked out on the landscape, "Why there!" he soliloquized, "there stretches the Campagna, as peacefully as if no enemy had ever trampled it, no blood ever watered its turf. It looks solid enough; one would not guess that it was undermined by the Catacombs. The city too—quiet as any Monsignore Clementi would wish it! Who would suppose there were death and tears, and plots and

counterplots, under those roofs? Why, under that very one, where the moon shines brightest on the windows, are Donati's wife and mother! Any man but a ruler would hear how the cry of the oppressed is rising up to heaven—ay, it will be heard there, and all the world shall know that it has been heard!" he exclaimed aloud, turning as if in appeal to the picture on the wall. The mild, steadfast look of the chief figure seemed to meet his own; he regarded it long and earnestly, then, suddenly turning away, took down a book from a shelf, lighted a lamp, and sat reading far into the night.

Succeeding days brought no new misfortune. Ravelli contrived to learn that the sentence of Donati was imprisonment, though, like all other trials for political offences, it had been secret, and his fate was only surmised by his friends. His advocate, Cerigo, moreover, paid the penalty of having defended him too warmly, by being suspended from practising his business for two months—a warning to the next lawyer who might be chosen to advocate the cause of a liberal. Leone went out and in, and continued his daily occupations with a sensation as if a sword were hanging over his head; but once more he escaped, though he received an official admonition that the police had their eye on him —a state of things which caused him no additional anxiety, as he had for some time known it to be the case.

He reflected long before he could decide where, with any prudence, he could for the future keep writings. His own room was manifestly unsafe; he would not let any friend run the risk. Yes, there was one—one who, though Italian by birth, was, in fact, English,

and as such was strongly protected—Vincenzo Moore. There was little fear of the police examining his possessions, and none that he might be secretly arrested. He was the man! if he should be willing, after full explanation, to be mixed up in the matter.

Leone speedily had an opportunity of telling him. Madama Cecchi had long been dying to reveal to Irene and Vincenzo his powers as an improvisatore, and one evening entreated him to let them hear him. He laughed, and bade her give him a subject, and she named the "Challenge of Barletta," one calculated to inspire even the least patriotic of Italians. It called out all Leone's power, and both Vincenzo and Irene exclaimed, wonderstruck, "Leone! Leone! it must be you who write the poems about which everybody is speculating! It is! it must be! how blind never to have guessed it before!" Madama Cecchi looked triumphant, though a little alarmed; but the disclosure led to full confidence between the two young men.

This new interest compensated, in some measure, for the departure of Mrs. Dalzell, which, long talked of and often delayed, came at last. She was reluctant to go; she owed much to Rome, and England was full of painful associations, but there was no choice for her. She lingered till June was come, and nearly every English person had left Rome; but the day fixed for her departure came at last. There were promises on all sides of a constant correspondence, which were kept, as far as she and Vincenzo were concerned. Irene wrote occasionally; when she did, her letters were a rapture of music and politics; she seemed thoroughly happy, and Leone must have kept his promise, for she always spoke of him with the same frank liking as of

Count Clementi, whom she reported to have become gradually absorbed into the popular side, and consequently to be out of favour with his uncle.

Madame Marriotti, the most uncertain of correspondents, sometimes sent a voluminous epistle, was sometimes mute for months; whenever she did write, she spoke of Irene with exceeding pride. Mrs. Dalzell began to fear that she made her work too hard, and frequently reminded her how many singers had failed from having overtasked their strength: a warning which Madame Marriotti treated with sovereign contempt, and which Mrs. Dalzell herself would have considered unnecessary, could she have seen how full of life, health, and spirits the once delicate girl had become, thriving on hard work and excitement, and daily looking more joyous.

When Mrs. Dalzell left Rome, she had purposed returning for the next winter, and answered Irene's tearful "*Addio*" with "*A rivederci;*" but it so happened that family affairs detained her in England; and nearly three years elapsed before the last view of Irene, bending forward and waving an adieu, was to be effaced by her cheerful welcome.

CHAPTER X.

To-day the doors and windows
Are hung with garlands all,
From Castor in the Forum
To Mars without the wall.—MACAULAY.

THE three years which elapsed before Mrs. Dalzell returned to Rome were brim full of those events which promised to realize even the most Utopian dreams of the Italians, beginning from the day when the unquiet

reign of Gregory XVI. ended, and that of the Cardinal Bishop, Mastaï Ferretti, began.

The Romans knew little of him; his early life, though one of self-denial and peril, had not been more remarkable than that of many missionaries. As a young man he had sought to enter the *Guardia Nobile*, but was rejected on account of ill-health, which soon ended in a dangerous illness; recovering from which "by the intercession of the Holy Virgin," to use the words of one of his biographers, "he proved his gratitude by consecrating himself to her service," became an ecclesiastic, and was sent to Peru and Mexico. Trials awaited him and his companions on first setting out; they were thrown into prison by the Spaniards at Majorca, attacked by corsairs, in danger in violent storms by sea; hunger, thirst, and weariness awaited them in the prairies of South America, where once they found no other shelter than a deserted hut built of bones, round which an odour of decay still lingered; and finally their mission being rendered vain through the jealousies of those in power, they returned to Rome.

Pio VII., who had protected Mastaï, was dead; but Leo XII. extended to him the same favour, and gave him the Archbishopric of Spoleto, whence he was translated to Imola. In 1841 he was made a cardinal, but remained at Imola; and so the Romans had hardly heard of him till, in 1846, he was elected Pope. He chose the name of Pio in grateful memory of his first patron, and he inherited all the difficulties which former Popes had postponed and complicated. Amongst the eager speculations as to who the new Pope would be, no one had dreamed of Cardinal Mastaï, and at first there was a little coldness and disappointment shown;

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but his first measure, namely, the amnesty to those languishing in exile and prison for political offences, at once aroused that frenzy of enthusiasm which for a time intoxicated both Pontiff and people.

The events passing at Rome had been trumpeted by every journal in Europe, but Mrs. Dalzell had a special correspondent in Vincenzo, who gave her still earlier and more accurate information, and it was with a feeling of interest and expectation quite unallied to those she had experienced on her first arrival, that she re-entered Rome on the night of the 7th of September, 1847. There was just moonlight enough to give a glimpse of the Tiber as she crossed the bridge, and to show where rose St. Angelo; and her fancy seemed already to discern among the distant buildings the palace roof under which slept Irene and Vincenzo. They little guessed who was in the carriage that rattled under their window. It was too late to visit them that night, and they did not expect her; she had left England at very short notice for the sake of travelling with friends, and had arrived by sea. A weary journey the land route from Civita Vecchia had been, along the sandy plains, where reeds, asphodel, and tamarisk shared the ground between them; and the flat country had a desolate look, like some of the ugliest parts of England, and a cheerful thing she found it to alight at the comfortable hotel in the familiar Piazza di Spagna, and be at once installed in her apartment.

By a little past ten o'clock the next morning she was on her way to the old palace, which had been her home for so many months, and where she hoped again to find a lodging; but scarcely was she in the street before she perceived that more was going on than was

accounted for by the *festa*, of which her courier had warned her. At such an hour Roman streets are seldom very full; it is chiefly the higher classes who are abroad, while later in the day comes the holiday time of the *impiegati*, the many who are employed in shops, in warehouses, and professions; but on this morning, high and low were in the streets; the shops were all shut, bouquets might be bought at every corner, the country people were flocking in, in their brilliant costumes, and all faces were turned towards the Corso. Mrs. Dalzell happened to be going in that direction, but when she reached the Corso, she found it was impossible to cross; in the palmiest days of the carnival never had it been so much thronged. A dense crowd lined it from end to end with eager, expectant faces, and there was a ceaseless hum of animated voices; on every story of every house, all the windows were wide open and full of heads. From one and all waved draperies of scarlet, white, or yellow, mixed with wreaths of box and myrtle; the whole people were gathered together waiting for a great event.

Every one was far too much excited and absorbed to spare a moment's thought to Mrs. Dalzell, and her servant found it perfectly impossible to make way for her. His strong hand and voice at last extorted an answer to his question of what was going on. The woman, whom he addressed, opened her large eyes, and exclaimed, "Are you a Pagan, then, that you don't know it is the feast of Maria Santissima, and that the Pope goes to the Popolo?" At the same instant, like a rising tide, swelled out the acclamation, rolling like thunder down the Corso where the triumphal arch rose in the distant piazza—one universal voice—

"The Pope comes—the Pope comes—Viva our Pope! viva Pio Nono!" and the mighty throng fell with one accord on their knees to welcome him who had said, "Blessed be Italy!" while passionate tears, shed not by women only, but by men old and young, testified to the adoration with which the Ninth Pius was regarded by his Romans. The long procession came slowly down the Corso, between the double line of people, a single mounted soldier preceded it. Such a sight had never been seen before; for, on ordinary occasions, the cardinals meet the Pope at Santa Maria del Popolo; but to do honour to the new Pontiff, and to please the people, they had on this day with one accord sought the Quirinal, and escorted him thence, each cardinal in his state coach, followed by one containing his attendants. Round that wherein sat Pio Nono, placid and smiling as he blessed the throng, were his gallant and handsome guard. Down came wreaths of flowers from every window as they passed, till they were piled high on the Pope's carriage—the cardinals followed in long succession, and ever more enthusiastically rose the shout "Viva, viva il Papa! viva Pio Nono!"

But there was a suppressed undertone of angry dissatisfaction, as the coaches of the cardinals passed before the eyes of the people, and the dark scowling faces within were seen. Some of these dignitaries leant back, and seemed to hear and see nothing; others frowned grimly, and all, with but two exceptions, looked rather like wrathful captives dragged after a triumphal car, than like men who were sympathizing in the general gladness. They heard the murmurs with darkening looks; two only had a cheerful and well-

pleased aspect, and looked round as if the scene were delightful to them. These were men well known for their liberal opinions, and believed to be the Pope's chief advisers; and certain it is, that after the death of one, and in the absence of the other, a striking change took place in the policy of the Pontiff. As the last coach went by, the crowd closed in, and followed up to the Piazza del Popolo, and all who could possibly enter thronged into the church, where high mass was performed, but a great number, hopeless of entering, returned home. Mrs. Dalzell thought she should be sure of at least finding Vincenzo, and went on to the palace; but her repeated ringing only brought to the door a servant girl, unknown to her—short, stout, with rough hair, curling all over her head; and her look of surprise at the English visitor showed that foreigners did not often visit the brother and sister. No one was at home. The padrona? At Santa Maria del Popolo. The signor and the signorina? Gone to see the procession. Even Vincenzo! Mrs. Dalzell learnt that her old rooms were unoccupied, and promised to call again next day. She next sought Madame Marriotti; who would surely be at home, for she hated crowd and ceremonies, and kept away from whatever other people went to see. Yet she was not to be found —gone to the Corso! Mrs. Dalzell perceived that she should get the same answer wherever she went, and leaving a few hastily scribbled lines for her friend, returned to her hotel.

In the afternoon Madame Marriotti appeared, having just reached home, found the note, and hurried off again without any luncheon; consequently she was nearly exhausted, and had to be fed and revived

before she could lucidly explain where she had been.

"No—no more—not any more—" said she, in the short, disconnected sentences, which sounded so odd and so familiar to Mrs. Dalzell—"not any more, I thank you. Oh, I am half dead. I do not know how I got here, but I found your note. Zenaide said an English lady—'*alta così*,' marking the stature in the air—had left it. I could hardly believe my senses. What has brought you so suddenly?"

Mrs. Dalzell explained, and Madame Marriotti unfastened her beloved old fur cloak which she still wore as if it had been December, though she had prevailed on herself to put on a lace bonnet, fanned herself, fidgeted, and grew composed.

"Ah, yes, I understand. Then you did not come on purpose for our grand *festa?*" said she, with a peculiar silent laugh, which glittered in her black eyes and on her lips with indescribable malice; "are we not all a parcel of fools, eh?"

"I don't know, dear madame, but I assure you I found myself upon my knees, with tears in my eyes, this morning. It was wonderfully grand and solemn."

"Yes, yes, yes, so it was, I dare say; I know at the time I was as foolish as anybody, but to think that we should be all bewitched into believing all this—imagining that the Government and the people are strong enough for it! yet I declare to you we do."

"I do, for one."

"My dear, did you see the faces of the cardinals to-day? The Pope, I do believe, means it all; intends to go on as he has begun; but all who know anything about it see that he must come to a collision with the

priests or with the people; he can't content both. At first the priests thought it was a matter not worth interfering in; their eyes were opened when he carried the amnesty with a high hand; but now they are afraid, for they know a straw would light up a revolution—it's in the air, like influenza. A revolution has been a word of ill omen from all ages, and that was why they imprisoned Galileo; he said the world moved, they wanted it to stand still; so they stopped his voice—*ma pur si muove!* So you went to look for Irene."

"I did think Vincenzo would have been at home, I confess."

"No, Cecchi and that young Nota contrived to convey him, before it all began, to the balcony of the Café Nuovo—he and I and Irene were all there."

"And I was standing just below!"

"Ah, we had something else to do besides looking for acquaintances. Did you leave a message for her? Oh, it is to be a surprise, is it? Well, you will see her to-morrow—no, I can't let you go there this evening; you must come to my house, I want you. I wrote to you of the child's *début* last spring; it was quite successful—quite, and I must say it has not turned her head. I don't mean that she created a *furore*, but she showed what was in her; people expect her to be celebrated some day; they go expressly to hear her now, and she improves steadily. She is the best pupil I ever had; her style is only too pure and good for the degenerate ears here, who only want to be tickled, and prefer Verdi to Scarlatti."

"If I could, I would have come for that *début*."

"I took a box, of course; I really felt so nervous that it quite knocked me up for a week. The opera

was *Le Sorelle*—a silly little thing, but that air—La, la, la, la, you recollect, I dare say—showed off the extent of her voice, and she quite created Elena's character; I had no notion how much she would make of it. Oddly enough, you know Madame St. Simon is here again, *prima donna assoluta* at Irene's theatre; I fancy she hates the child to that extent that she could poison her."

More details followed; Mrs. Dalzell said, smilingly, "Leone has told his secret!"

"Yes, the very day after her first appearance," said Madame Marriotti, indignantly.

"Then at least he kept his word, since it was not the day before. You see I was right."

"I suppose he did keep his promise; yes, I certainly must say he did. Though I think she began to suspect at last; and if her mind had not been full of her music, she would have guessed long before. He is quite the head of the liberal party here, as of course you know. To think of his having written all those capital poems—I could hardly believe it when Irene told me; we hold up our heads, and are proud of them under this new *régime*. You will come to my house to-night? There will be a few people, just my old friends, for I don't make new acquaintances now. No, he certainly kept his promise," said she, with one of her abrupt returns to a former subject, "except that he gave her a canary bird; but to be sure it was to amuse Vincenzo, and a great pet he makes of it. You heard the gun fire this morning, I suppose?"

"Yes, what does that signify?"

"Why, people say the Pope has it done, because he can't understand Italian time, Heaven knows why;

—I never heard he was a Turk or a New Zealander, but he got up at twelve o'clock at night instead of morning, or something of that sort, and after that all the clocks had to reform, like the rest of us, and go by French time. The people stop one in the streets and ask what hour it is, for they can't understand the new way. Ah, well, there are changes everywhere, and now we all look at our watches when the gun fires, and take quite an interest in it. Oh dear, how tired I am! and this new bonnet makes me feel quite ill; I hate wearing new things, but Zenaide said I really must, to-day."

Mrs. Dalzell did not dislike the idea of an evening at Madame Marriotti's, especially as the old lady stayed so long, that it was too late to return to the palace. In her former visit to Italy she had made acquaintance with several of the little worlds of society that revolve in perfectly separate orbits in Rome; and on the whole there was none she liked so well as that which had Madame Marriotti for a centre. It had the peculiarity that those who appeared in it were for the most part rather friends than mere acquaintances; they had sought one another out from having something in common, and Madame Marriotti's name was so celebrated, that it was esteemed an honour to be admitted to her *réunions*, and she was considerably exclusive, and admitted none who had not something to recommend them. All who came to her house were people worth meeting: every one with musical talent was sure sooner or later to find his way there; but the staple of her visitors were artists and musicians resident at Rome.

Mrs. Dalzell found the staircase better lighted than

on a former memorable visit, and that the "few friends" were in fact a very large party, amongst whom she recognised several who, in her former visit, had often caused her to smile, and silently wonder whether the artist gentlemen cultivated bushy beards to counterbalance the general absence of cap among the artist ladies; but some of the oddest-looking people were precisely those who in England would have been sought after as the tawniest of lions, and their peculiarities set down as marks of genius! Here they were at home, and looked as they pleased among other lions.

As Mrs. Dalzell entered the first of the two rooms which were lighted up and filled with guests, Madame Marriotti came hastily towards her and made her sit down near the door of the second, beginning a rather absent, preoccupied conversation, appearing afraid that every one who came up to them should betray some secret, and looking restlessly round as she talked at random. Presently the first notes of the piano were heard from the inner room; she half rose, looking very eager; there was a general expectant hush, and then a voice, sweet, pure, and steady, came floating through the rooms, while the words—

> Il buon prenze, il buon pastore,
> Ch' alla terra Iddio mandò,
> Come un angelo del Cielo
> Improviso a noi raggiò,

told it was a hymn in honour of the popular idol, Pio Nono.

Mrs. Dalzell involuntarily rose and made her way through the throng round the door of the second room, till she could see the animated face of the singer, whose charming voice she had instantly recognised. It was

indeed Irene, who stood by the piano, dressed in white, with a gold ribbon—the Papal colours—her looks inspired like those of a sybil, as she sang, from her soul, the hymn written by Leone in honour of the Pope, in whom they saw the messenger of Heaven sent to give freedom to Italy. It was the first time it had been heard; the last words of the first verse were lost in a frenzy of applause, which only ceased to allow her to sing the next, and burst out again and again with new vehemence. As she paused amid a fresh whirlwind of acclamations, Mrs. Dalzell looked at Madame Marriotti and took her hand. There were tears in the old lady's eyes, and her voice was unsteady as she said "Ah, there is no fame so fleeting as a great singer's; but I shall be remembered a little longer as the teacher of Irene Mori. I was celebrated in my time too, but I never sang so well as she, did I?"

At that moment Mrs. Dalzell perceived Leone; he had glided round the piano, and was close behind Irene, unseen by her. Her enthusiasm had changed into a smiling indifference as the crowd surrounded her with innumerable compliments. Leone bent slightly and whispered a word or two in her ear, and she lifted her eyes to his with a look that replied so fully, so eloquently, that Mrs. Dalzell involuntarily exclaimed, "Ah! she will be content with love, instead of fame, after all!"

An ejaculation from Madame Marriotti reminded her how disagreeable to her friend she was making herself; but she forgot to apologize; for, just then, Irene passed through the crowd, which opened to make way for her, and paused to speak to two young girls, seated close to an elderly lady. One had before

attracted Mrs. Dalzell's attention by her true Roman face, with its low brow, unabashed, brilliant eyes, and black wavy hair. While Irene sang, her countenance had grown dark as night; it seemed as if the triumphant hymn gave her actual pain; her expression was positively startling. The other girl seemed nearly of the same age, but she was darker, shyer, more childlike, with eyes like those of a fawn; and as Irene sang, they were lifted up, and seemed to laugh with delight.

Mrs. Dalzell asked who the two were. "That one with black hair, rolled back, is the Contessina Gemma, Count Clementi's sister—you have heard of him?—a noble, turned radical; the little one is Imelda Olivetti, the *sposa* of young Ravelli, Nota's chief ally. Ah! there the child is," as Irene approached, perceived Mrs. Dalzell, and, the words she had been about to address to Madame Marriotti dying on her lips, she threw her arms about her friend's neck, with exclamations of delight, regardless of the crowd.

"Ah! I have given you both a surprise," said Madame Marriotti; "now, say all you have to say as fast as you can, for I shall want you to sing again presently; meanwhile, I suppose, Gemma Clementi can manage something. Contessina, let us have that air of Stradella's, or get your brother to sing '*Deh ti conforta*' with you; and be sure you put sentiment into it."

She made the girl obey, after a resistance rather sullen than timid. That Madame Marriotti invited her to sing in her house was sufficient proof of her capacity; but Mrs. Dalzell and Irene behaved so ill as to talk with Leone, in a low voice, all through the song. Irene was overflowing with the doings of the morning; her own affairs were quite secondary, and she had to be

allowed to exhaust the first subject before she would tell anything about her *début*, or that she had sung at several private parties, *chaperoned* by Madame Marriotti, and that she got sixteen *scudi* a night—quite a fortune, and it would be more another season.

"You were satisfied to-night, signora?" she asked, in playful certainty of the answer.

"You vain child! suppose I say no?"

"Oh, you will not say that, signora; I could not help being inspired to-night," she said, with a glance at Leone.

"Ah, Signor Nola!" said Mrs. Dalzell, with a smile, "I have been hearing of your misdeeds from Madame Marriotti."

"She has been my worst enemy, but I can afford to forgive her now," said Leone.

"She tells me many sad things," said Irene; "she says I am spoiled for an artist, and that I encourage Leone to set up Italy as my rival; but I shall always choose for Italy to come first; I am not afraid."

"Italy is always to be first," said Leone, smiling proudly; "we are ready to make sacrifices when Italy asks for them."

"And Vincenzo, what does he say to your setting up a rival to him, Irene?"

"Oh, signora!" exclaimed Irene, with a wounded look, and she shrank away from Leone, so that Mrs. Dalzell repented her words; but he took Irene's hand, saying, "There is no rivalry where there is one family; Vincenzo has taken me into his, and made me rich."

"Rich, indeed!" said Irene, recovering her bright look; "he is so proud, signora! he will have nothing to

say till he has made a fortune, though he knows long betrothments are unheard of here."

Mrs. Dalzell thought how this frank speaking, perfectly ladylike and refined though Irene was, differed from the bashfulness of an English girl in a like case; but she could not like it less; it suited the southern maiden, who had already several times that evening reminded her of Juliet.

As they were continuing to talk of Vincenzo, Gemma Clementi left the piano and presently came to Irene, whispering something to her. Irene rose, looked vexed, said to Mrs. Dalzell, "I will soon return," and followed her to a little room, where cloaks and hoods had been taken off. "Well, Gemma, what is it? I want to go back."

"Oh, you are to sing again, of course; at all events, it cannot be that hymn; it would drive me mad to hear it again. Every word made me feel as if you had stabbed me, and if Luigi had been there I would have stabbed you," said Gemma, clenching her hand and knitting her brow. "And to see that silly child, Imelda, full of delight! The world is not wide enough for us two; but, at least, Ravelli loves me, and only me, though they have chosen her to be his wife."

"Did you only bring me here to say all this?"

"I hate the name of Italy—my only real rival! Oh, you asked me something? No, I brought you here to see Pietrucchio. I am kinder to you than you are to me and Ravelli."

She ran back into the other room, and in her place stood Clementi. He was an old friend now, and Irene said, without hesitation, "I am so glad to see you before you go."

"Before I go on a mission whose danger you well know. Irene, this may be a long adieu; once before you closed my lips when something escaped me of another love mingling with that for our country; will you do the same now? Ah! I understand; no need to speak."

"Oh, Count Clementi! you gave up your prospects for a nobler love than mine!"

He looked at her fixedly and said, "When we last spoke of this, you said that, though you did not love me, you loved no one else?"

The words were a question, and her face replied plainly.

A thousand things were in the look that flashed across his face as he spoke the one word "Leone"?

"Yes," she answered. Both stood still; that moment had overthrown the schemes of three years; little stood, at that moment, between Nota and a stiletto, but, even in the few instants which passed while Irene stood mute beside him, Clementi's subtle brain had devised new schemes. When he spoke again, it was to say "Farewell!"

"No, *au revoir!* You will return, you will bring success; these are days for nobler things than mere private hopes!" said Irene, earnestly.

"When I return, if return I do, it will be to find you Nota's bride?"

"No," she answered, "that cannot be yet, but—Count Clementi—I love him."

She meant to crush all hope, and at least she stung him, so that he could barely disguise the look of hatred that crossed his face; but his voice did not betray him as he said, "It is enough; the subject shall never be named again, and the future still belongs to me."

"Oh yes, the future, our country's future! We have that best interest in common; we have shared all the past hopes and fears, and we shall have more good news when you return."

"Yes, when I return. Till then, farewell, Irene!"

He held her hand for a moment and regarded her steadfastly; kissed it once, and disappeared, while she returned to Mrs. Dalzell with troubled thoughts. The first question was innocent and yet embarrassing enough. "Was the handsome girl who called you away Count Clementi's sister?"

"Gemma Clementi—yes."

"A great friend?"

"We are such near neighbours that I see her constantly now that she has come home from the convent, but we are hardly friends."

"But her brother is Vincenzo's special ally, after Signor Nota, of course."

"Yes, he and Luigi Ravelli."

"And who did I hear that that pretty child is, and the lady in black velvet, just what one would fancy Lady Capulet to have been? She ought to wear a flowing train and a hood."

"That is Imelda Olivetti, a dear, dear child, and the lady is her mother."

"Child! she is sixteen, and Ravelli's *promessa sposa*," said Leone.

"I love her dearly," said Irene; "do let me introduce her to you."

"Thank you; but my Italian has grown rather rusty: it strikes me that both it and your English would be the better for a little practice, signorina."

"She is teaching me English," said Leone, with pretended alarm; "I hope she is capable of it?"

Irene shook her head saucily at the implied doubt, and in fact she spoke English very well, and her foreign accent was but piquant and pleasing.

Madame Marriotti came up again, and made them listen to a German pianist; afterwards she sent Irene to sing again, and sitting down by Mrs. Dalzell, told her who different people were, while from time to time old acquaintances came up to welcome the stranger and remained a few minutes to talk on the inexhaustible subject of the new Pope and his measures. Late in the evening an ecclesiastic entered, distinguished of course by his particular dress, but still more by his remarkable countenance, which forcibly recalled to Mrs. Dalzell's mind a picture she had somewhere seen of a Spanish saint—where, she could not remember, but this man might have been the original. A thin, ascetic face, the features so delicate that they would have been feminine had they been a whit less austere; deepset eyes gleaming under a broad, pale forehead; with an indescribable look as if he were accustomed not only to read men, but to govern them. Such a face might have belonged to the founder or reformer of some rigid order; but, stern and watchful as it was when at rest, it became singularly fascinating and persuasive, even seductive, when he spoke; and as he entered, there was a movement and murmur among those present, which showed he was a person of eminence, and several immediately surrounded him, as if proud to claim his acquaintance. His spare figure seemed from its straightness to rise above those around him, and he remained for some minutes the centre of a

group, answering, with calm, soft tones, the buzz of eager appeal. Mrs. Dalzell noticed that Irene kissed his hand as he paused near her, and that Leone was one of those standing round him; and turned to express her surprise to her hostess, but Madame Marriotti had hurried to welcome the new comer, and remained standing in deep conversation with him for some minutes. When she left him, he sat down near the piano, speaking occasionally to his neighbours, but generally listening to what went on around him, yet without seeming to do so; the words appeared to float to his ear, and an occasional remark showed that he heard and appreciated what was said on all sides in spite of the buzz of voices, in which the words "The Pope," "Amnesty," "Cicceruacchio," "Gizzi," "Austrian policy," seemed to cross and recross each other in all directions, with a freedom most significant that a new *régime* had begun. Madame Marriotti returned to Mrs. Dalzell, and whispered, "Padre Rinaldi. I don't love priests in general, but I do believe that man is a saint, if there be such things now-a-days, and he has enormous influence here; the people absolutely worship him. His eloquence! you should hear him preach. I went once to St. Andrea della Valle, but the crowd nearly killed me—there was not room for a reed in the church. He has travelled everywhere and knows all languages, and I have heard wonderful things (I'm sure I do not know whether they are true or not; one can't believe half one hears, especially at Rome); but they do say, that the power he had amongst some tribe of savages whom he lived amongst for years, and converted, is something too extraordinary to be believed."

"I could believe anything of that man," said Mrs.

Dalzell, looking at him with great interest. He raised his eyes and met hers at the moment, and she withdrew her glance hastily, lowering her voice, as she said, "There certainly is mesmerism in him; I feel sure he could obtain any power he pleased over me."

"Mesmerism! it is strictly forbidden here; perhaps that means nobody but the priests are to possess it," said Madame Marriotti, who certainly had no love for the Roman clergy. "You must ask young Nota about him; he will have plenty to tell you; Padre Rinaldi is his oracle, and certainly a reforming priest is worth noting."

There was a constant movement in the rooms, as well as incessant talking, and a little crowd soon interposed between Mrs. Dalzell and Padre Rinaldi; but she still seemed to feel his eye upon her, and even while laughing at herself, still declared that he possessed mesmeric power.

Count Clementi had disappeared an hour or two before, and when she asked where he was, no one seemed to know. Irene and Leone could both have explained, but the matter was a secret. He had asked for no pledge of silence from Irene respecting the declaration he had made, earnestly as he wished that Leone should not hear of it. He rightly judged that from her no one would ever know that he had sought to be more than a friend.

CHAPTER XI.

Well done, thou watcher on the lonely tower!
Is the day breaking? Dawns the happy hour?
We pine to see it:—tell us yet again,
If the broad daylight breaks upon the plain.

It breaks, it comes—the misty shadows fly,
A rosy radiance gleams upon the sky;
The mountain tops reflect it calm and clear,
The plain is yet in shade, but day is near.

MACKAY.

MRS. DALZELL was more successful in her second visit to Palazzo Clementi than she had been in her first. The servant girl again opened the door, but received her less wonderingly, and volunteered the information, "*La padrona sta a pettinarsi.*"

How many times before the same odd phrase had amused the English lodger until she learnt at last to comprehend that this "pectinating" process meant that Madama Cecchi was laying aside her morning *deshabille*, and preparing herself for the afternoon. She knew it would be vain to expect to see her for an hour at least, and went to the sitting-room of Irene and Vincenzo. Both were at home, and both started up joyfully to receive her, and her old favourite Tevere overwhelmed her with demonstrations of delight.

The sitting-room had become thoroughly Italian in her absence; the walls roughly, but very effectively painted with views of Tivoli, Albano, and the Campagna; no carpet on the uneven brick floor, except a narrow strip beside the sofa, and the furniture had a stiff, formal look; the centre of the room was occupied by a piano; a plaster bust of Pio Nono stood on a bracket with an embroidery frame below it, and the red sofa was adorned with a cushion, on which Madama

Cecchi, in some extraordinary fit of industry, had worked a bird of Paradise with a brilliant tail. Less Italian looked a small bookcase.

Vincenzo was writing in a thick manuscript book as she entered; he was in his indoors costume of dressing-gown and velvet cap, and he looked even thinner and more of an invalid than of old; his complexion had become that of one in confirmed ill health, and the crutches near his sofa showed that he found moving as difficult as ever, but his countenance was bright with joy at the arrival of Mrs. Dalzell. Irene's music and his carving for some time formed the topic of conversation: he had been very fortunate in obtaining employment; Signor Trajano had been very kind in recommending his works, and he was always busy. Mrs. Dalzell described again to him, what she had already told by letter, how good an effect some of his garlands of fruit and flowers had in an English mansion, where they had been placed, and described the paintings which they surrounded. When all this had been told, Irene called her attention to a carnation on a table.

"Yes, I have been admiring it; but how come you to admit scented flowers?"

Irene and Vincenzo smiled, and the former placed it before Mrs. Dalzell, who then discovered that though it was a *bonâ fide* carnation plant, the flowers were paper. The imitation was so good that she repeatedly touched them before she could believe they were artificial.

"They are feigned," said Irene, unconsciously translating from the Italian in which she thought.

"Imelda Olivetti made them and sent them to me."

"But these are not *finti;* these are my garden," said Vincenzo, moving with difficulty to the window, which he opened; "see, I have a stock, a camellia, and a rose-tree, and here is the canary which Leone was pleased to say he brought as a gift to me. See! Tevere cannot bear it—he is so jealous of it, that when I let it out, we are obliged to put him in the anteroom. Is he not a pretty fellow? white and yellow, the Papal colours! And do you see the plants—the goldfinch, in the window of the top story opposite?"

"Your neighbour quite beats you in colours, Vincenzo; a red and blue cage!"

"My neighbour is an artisan, and we are great friends; we water our plants and feed our birds at the same hour every day; as the clock strikes, I always see his black beard and purple cap appear among them. I thought he must be a good fellow, he is so fond of them, and he has quite tamed a little yellow water-wag-tail, that is always running over the roof here; I suppose he passed the same judgment on me, for we always exchange nods, and look for each other. Irene and I made up our minds that we would give him a pleasure, and bought a rose-tree for him; he only possessed stocks and wall-flowers till then, and we sent it without saying whence it came; but somehow he found out, and came to thank us."

"Such a scene of gratitude!" said Irene; "and he has vowed to do service whenever and wherever he can."

"Just the same number of people looking out of window as ever!" said Mrs. Dalzell.

"It is our way of taking the air," said Vincenzo; "I find it very refreshing."

They sat down again, and Irene continued, "I showed you the carnation, signora, because I want to talk to you about Imelda. It is a secret; but you stand so apart from it all that it is like telling a confessor; and I want advice, for Vincenzo and I are both puzzled. You heard that she was Luigi Ravelli's *promessa sposa;* he is an engineer now, but he was brought up in Signor Olivetti's studio."

"His studio—he is a painter or a sculptor, then?"

"Oh no," said Irene, perplexed.

Vincenzo saw the difficulty, and added, "Perhaps in English the word is used differently; it only means here a place to study in. Signor Olivetti is a lawyer."

"I understand, and Signor Ravelli was his pupil."

"So," pursued Irene, "Imelda has known him all her life; the two families settled, almost as soon as she was born, that their son and daughter should marry. Luigi never liked the law, and he has persuaded his father to let him be an engineer (you know we are to have railroads now), and not marry just yet. I am afraid the real reason is, that he and Gemma Clementi love each other. She came home from Sta. Caterina di Siena last summer, and was to have married some old *marchese*, but he died. I wish she had! I don't know how it began, but they meet and write continually, and no one knows but ourselves."

"Not here!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalzell.

"No, no; we could not allow that, though Ravelli is a great friend of ours."

"And Irene positively refused to give him Gemma's letters," added Vincenzo; "consequently they have respected her ever since."

"How can all this be if Italian girls are so jealously watched?"

"Perhaps it sharpens their wits for deceit, signora; and besides, Contessa Clementi is an invalid, and trusts to her maid and the sister-in-law who lives with her, and who takes very indifferent care of Gemma, I suspect; indeed, Leone privately begged me not to let Irene go out anywhere with her, long before the signorina knew he had any right to interfere."

"Gemma has insisted on being friends with us, but I do not like her—I could not like any one who perilled dear Imelda's happiness," said Irene.

"Is this family compact a very serious thing?" asked Mrs. Dalzell. "Surely, the simple thing to do is for Signor Luigi to tell his father the truth."

"It would be in vain," said Vincenzo; "Signor Ravelli is quite despotic—a hot-headed, kind, tyrannical old man, never opposed by any one in his own family; he would only think Luigi a foolish boy, and not listen. He cannot understand that his son can be grown up. Besides, the Clementi would never consent, though they are *decadente;* Ravelli is not even a count in the provinces."

"Do the Olivetti family know how they are risking their daughter's happiness?"

"They would not believe it. They would think this a silly affair which the marriage would end, and Imelda has been taught from childhood to consider Luigi as her future husband. She is such a child that she does not see that he only likes her as a sister."

"O, signora, don't you think Luigi must find out how much better a wife she would make him than Gemma, who is so intensely selfish?"

"Who cannot endure to see him pat Tevere here; she would poison anything he loved, she is so jealous and violent; and he is as blind as a bat to it, or taking it all for love!" said Vincenzo.

"She even dislikes to hear Italy spoken of, because she thinks he cares too much about it," said Irene; "but she knows better than to let him see that."

"And Imelda cares for Italy just because he does —neither of them have a spark of real patriotism, but I can forgive her. The thing that puzzles me is, why Clementi, who sees everything, lets this go on. Perhaps he might, after all, let her marry a commoner. He has come with her several times when Luigi was here, and yet seemed to notice nothing, I cannot make it out."

"Yet you like him?"

"Indeed I do, he has made noble sacrifices—he goes too far, I own, but of course he must be spurred by the fear that men may suspect him of a leaning to his old party."

"And Cecchi?"

Vincenzo shook his head. "Cecchi is becoming a fanatic, quiet as he seems; once set him off, and you have a regular Jacobin. I don't like his principles; he is mad about equality, and republics, and socialism, and such stuff. Our best men see that what we really want is a constitutional government, such as we shall have if people will but wait; Rome was not built in a day, nor will it be reformed in one; but Cecchi and his party call us moderates, Pope's men; they are absorbed at present in one great body of liberals, but I am afraid they will split with it soon. Such as Cecchi would stick at nothing to compass their ends, and yet

you know how mild and amiable the man is in private life. I only hope the Government will hold them well in, for they would make small account of men's lives if they stood in their way. There have been many assassinations of late years."

"Not in Rome?"

"No, in the provinces; but if a man stabs another, to this day they say in the Trastevere, '*Poor* fellow! he has murdered such a one,' and all agree to hide him."

"Because they think he must be brave," said Irene.

"There! you see she understands the feeling. As if there could be bravery in a cowardly sudden blow with the stiletto! Fair fight, face to face, I can admire; but you see, those who justify assassination say it is the only means to get justice where fear and bribery rule everything."

"Their reign is over now! These three last have been wonderful years," said Irene, triumphantly.

"Yes, so Vincenzo's letters showed me."

"My letters! If I had told you half what I might! You little guessed how much more there was to tell—what risks we were all running! You must know that Leone was the very soul of what Government would have called a plot, what I call a propaganda; though perhaps the reverend fathers here, Loyola's disciples, might object to that use of the word," said Vincenzo, maliciously. "The object was to spread liberal opinions, and give men some definite idea what to aim at, reform and freedom for Italy, but no driving away of kings and attempts at impossible republics. The thing was to get this into people's heads, but the very mention of

such ideas was as much as one's life was worth. We all knew we risked life and liberty. There were Nota, Cecchi, Ravelli, and Donati at first, who planned and organized the measures to be taken, then myself. We wrote, and got our papers printed in England, or circulated them in MS. Irene can tell you who copied many of them; it was in fact a kind of secret society, and in these three years our progress has been worth all the danger—we are counted by hundreds all over the Papal States; but it was perilous work. You can't be sure among numbers that some won't boast or betray; we were standing on a mine with a lighted match in it."

"Leone might well say that, if I realized his position, I should not promise him Irene," said Mrs. Dalzell; "was this your care of her, Vincenzo?"

"Signora," he answered seriously, "there are things more precious than even life or liberty; we are Italians, and she is Nota's promised wife. This was no play; it was life and death in thorough earnest. We had to distrust the very air we breathed. The danger from the over-zealous, like Cecchi, was as great as it was from traitors. Over and over again Leone's room was searched; more than once, I am convinced, a spy came here under pretext of buying my carvings. I assure you there were days when every ring at the bell was as startling as if the police must be outside.

Irene lent her head on her hand and sighed. She knew more about a conspiracy now than in the days of the *Pastorale*.

"I can hardly fancy such boys organizing a serious plot!" said Mrs. Dalzell; "Nota himself not seven-and-twenty—there was Cecchi, to be sure."

"It is only the young who have hope or courage enough to shape the future," said Vincenzo; "besides, Leone has a wonderful power of inspiring other people with his own brave, ardent spirit. Twice it seemed all over with us—the first time just before I knew anything about it, when poor Donati was arrested, and copies of papers and some of Leone's poems were found on him; but he kept the secret well. Poor fellow! we thought the amnesty would have given him back to us, but he has never been heard of. Again, in '46, the police had certainly got information, but Pope Gregory died, and all proceedings were stopped; for the city was like a seething cauldron, and Government was afraid of exciting the people. And since that we have been able to stand forth in daylight, thank Heaven; no one is persecuted for being a liberal now, and Rome is proud of her poet and *improvisatore*."

"Yes," said Irene; "but still you tell the signora all this in confidence, Vincenzo."

"I do—there is no need to say much about it. Still, now that I look back, it seems marvellous all went well—such hair-breadth 'scapes! We never could have got our papers from England, if one of our associates had not belonged to the Custom-house, and another traded from Marseilles to Ostia. Our chief opponent was Madama Cecchi—we were obliged to let her into the secret, and she and Cecchi had suffered so much from his meddling with conspiracy before, that no wonder she dreaded it; but she came into it at last."

"It appears to me, that the women are the chief sufferers, after all, Vincenzo."

"They are proud to accept that part, since they

cannot take a more active one, signora," said Irene, raising her head and smiling.

"Did Clementi know of all this?"

"Not till quite the end of Pope Gregory's days. Naturally our friends had not the same confidence in him as we have; his being Monsignore Clementi's nephew was of course very much against him, but all know what he really is now."

There was a pause, Mrs. Dalzell confounded by what she heard, and Vincenzo mentally reviewing those days of danger, anxiety, hope, and triumph. Irene broke it by saying, "We have gone a long way from Imelda. What do you say about that, signora?"

"Well, my dear child, I don't know what to say. I don't see that you can do anything, but it is a disagreeable position for you to be in. Do you see much of these girls?"

"Gemma is always slipping in, and she has made friends with Imelda; I cannot think why, for I know she hates her."

"Cannot you guess? I can, though Leone says I am a thorough Englishman, slow and sure. These Italians are so conceited, signora," said Vincenzo, looking playfully at his sister; "they think no one knows anything but themselves. Why, don't you see, she meets Ravelli at Casa Olivetti?"

"Oh, Vincenzino! that would be too treacherous!"

"Much she thinks of that! Ravelli angers me most; he is the most honourable fellow in everything else, but the fact is he laughs at the family compact."

"*Zitto!* there is Gemma herself," said Irene, as a rapid knock came at the door, and Gemma entered. She certainly looked very handsome, even in the un-

tidy morning costume which displeased Mrs. Dalzell's English eye. She looked startled at finding a visitor, but replied readily in French when Mrs. Dalzell addressed her, and explained that she had come to practise some music with Irene, wich was to be sung next day at the Amateur Philharmonic Society; and she showed that she knew how to make herself agreeable, by her polite remarks to Mrs. Dalzell on Irene's singing and acting. Her own was quite as good—at least the latter, Vincenzo muttered in English. She looked at him with a rapid penetrating glance, like her brother's, as if she divined what he said; and then, standing by the piano while Irene opened her music, whispered, "Pietrucchio is gone; he bade me tell you to give this to Ravelli yourself." Irene saw the direction was in the count's handwriting, and she had no choice but to accept the commission. They had scarcely begun to sing, when a knock came at the door again, and a lady's maid signed to Gemma to come out, and they heard the words, "The signora contessa wants you; I heard your aunt say you were with your embroidery mistress in her room, but you had better come in directly."

Gemma returned, and said she was obliged to go, and she disappeared with the *cameriera*.

"There!" said Vincenzo, emphatically. "What has she given you, Irene? I dare say she has slipped in a note! What do you think of her, signora? a handsome, false face, is it not?"

They were again interrupted; this time by the appearance of Madama Cecchi, enthusiastically delighted to see Mrs. Dalzell, who further delighted her by producing an English gift for her—a case of Sheffield

scissors. The padrona made a sweeping and stately reverence, and received them as though they were made of diamonds. On hearing that Mrs. Dalzell was coming to lodge with her again, she said she had fully hoped and expected it; she believed no tenant had ever left her without its being a day of mourning on both sides; she had suffered so much in parting from them, that she had resolved never to let herself feel affection for them again.

"You forget the Russian general," said the malicious Vincenzo.

"Ah, Heaven! the Russian general! what a man! what a man! Impossible to please him — what I suffered at that time none know, but I and Heaven! Only an educated person can suffer so," said she, clasping her hands on her heart. "Always dissatisfied, always calling for his man, or Nino, or me—never quiet one moment; a voice like thunder, a step like Atlas! Enough! He returned last winter — he never knew what he made me undergo; I was robust, I had a fine figure before he came, but I grew lean, a sight to horrify! My friends used to say, 'But what is it? what is the matter with you?' and I, 'Nothing, nothing at all;' for I have a certain spirit, I never complain. As I said, he returned last year, and, like all my lodgers, remembered me, and brought me a beautiful present, which I will show you, and he asked if I had lodgings to let again. I had an apartment vacant, but I told him it was let for the season — he enters my house no more. Imagine, dear signora, on the coldest nights he would spend hours in pacing the corridors, and saying he was too hot; while he admitted the night air through the whole house by leaving the door wide

open — a draught as dangerous as a stroke from a dagger! Ah, what a man!"

"And then he quarrelled with a Polish family who happened to live at a corner of this floor," said Vincenzo, "and sent them word that they must leave the palace or he must."

"How did it end?"

"Oh, both stayed, but they were natural enemies, always at war."

"What has become of Filomena and Agata, signora? I see you have new servants."

The laughing glance exchanged between brother and sister showed that this, too, was a sore subject with the padrona.

"Agata is married," said she, "well married to a baker in the Babuino, whence I get all my bread; but as for that other — ah, signora! what misery servants are! in every house in Rome is tribulation on account of them. You recollect how good that girl was? We used to call her Saint Filomena, on account of the purity of her manners. Honest," continued the padrona, counting on her fingers, "that is one. Agile, two. Of a good heart, three. Enough. She met with a lover, a *birbante*, an idle fellow, who turned her head. I preached to her in vain. I said, 'This cannot continue; marry at once, or give him up.'"

"I shall report this advice to Leone," said Vincenzo, thereby winning the padrona's hearty laugh, but, nevertheless, she continued to detail her troubles. "In vain, absolutely in vain. Did she go to the door — there he was. Did I send her on an errand; he was leaning on the chains in the piazza, and she took three hours to perform what should have taken as many minutes.

At last I said she was the scandal of the palace, and must leave me in a month. She went that day, and sent her sister to say she should come back no more. But what a girl!"

"The end of it was that she displeased the *birbante* by *civetteria*," said Vincenzo.

"How?"

"Coquetry; did you never see two little *civette* coquetting together?" said Irene, putting her head on one side, and looking exactly like a *civetta* owl, while Madama Cecchi completed the portrait by mimicking its petulant cry.

"And he declared that he would poniard her, and then himself, and end his days on a scaffold," continued Vincenzo; "I don't know how he meant to do all three, but he contented himself with giving her a good beating."

"You have not as pretty a maid now, signora," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"No, ugly, very ugly, but swift — she runs like the wind; she is a little demon. The other is pretty, Menica. You have not seen her yet. She is discreet, too, a nun in her conduct."

"I shall beg to have the pretty one to wait on me. Now, signora, can we settle about my rooms, or must we wait for Signor Cecchi?"

"Cecchi!" began the padrona, in a tone of profound contempt at the idea of his interfering with her domestic arrangements; but instantly subsiding into politeness, "it will be a happiness for him to have the signora as his tenant again. How often have we spoken of you, and I have said, 'Do not fear, Nino; she will return, she will honour us again with her presence.' That is

his way. The signora will see when he hears she is in Rome, what joy — Nino! Ni!"

"*Che c'è?* What is it?" asked the pleasant voice of her husband, as he advanced into the room. "Ah, what is this! the English signora! I am too happy to see her returned to us. How is it I did not hear of it?"

"I came in too late to tell you last night, and you were gone out before I was up this morning," said Irene.

"The signora has come to ask if we have an apartment for her, Ni!"

"*Per Bacco!*" exclaimed Cecchi in utter consternation, "I have just met with a Prussian baron and promised it to him! How could I guess you would have let it in my absence?"

"See, signora," said the padrona, without even a reproachful look at her husband, "I should have been charmed to have you here again: you would have been welcome as rain in August; it pierces my heart to lose you, but you hear! Husbands are ever the masters— what can I do?"

"But I say, I should have been grateful — too happy to have the signora here!" exclaimed Nino, driven to despair by this speech; "what can I say — what can I do? I will go to the baron; I will tell him how it is; he is a man of honour, a gentleman, he will understand — excuse, signora," and he rushed out breathless.

"Let us go to your apartment, signora," said the padrona, composedly, as if nothing had occurred; "there may be some improvement we could have the pleasure of making for you."

She led the way, Mrs. Dalzell followed, struggling not to smile, and Irene and Vincenzo fairly gave way to the laughter they had hardly suppressed for the last five minutes.

CHAPTER XII.

With a gentle leap
The rill runs o'er, and round, fern, flowers, and ivy creep
Fantastically tangled; the green hills
Are clothed with early blossoms, through the grass
The quick-eyed lizard rustles, and the bills
Of summer birds sing welcome as ye pass;
Flowers fresh in hue, and many in their class,
Implore the pausing step, and with their dyes
Dance in the soft breeze in a fairy mass;
The sweetness of the violet's deep blue eyes,
Kissed by the breath of heaven, seems coloured by its skies.
Childe Harold.

THE theatres had just re-opened, and Irene, besides still continuing to study regularly with Madame Marriotti, was much occupied by rehearsals and performances. She was a very conscientious cantatrice, studying all her parts, great and small, with equal care, and giving in consequence to each a peculiar cast of her own, so that the public sometimes hardly knew whether to approve of her deviations from established traditions; but she was beginning to be well known as a cantatrice of great promise and of an excellent school, and was already becoming the favourite singer at the theatre where she was engaged, though she had Madame St. Simon, a beauty and a celebrity, to eclipse her.

Irene was entirely devoted to her profession; she had set an ideal standard of perfection before her, and did not need to be told that she had not yet reached it. Indeed, she was sometimes amusingly indignant that the public were so easily satisfied, and was out of

all patience when she discovered how far most of her companions made a very little pains go. Her theatrical life had two sides — one noble and animating, the other so bitter and depressing that at times she was almost disgusted with her art itself. The *tracasseries* of the theatre, the character of many of her associates, the spite, envy, and malice which seemed to influence everything, great or small, these were absolutely revolting to the young cantatrice, whose own life had been so singularly guarded. Some of those, amongst whom she was thrown had characters as unblemished as her own, and amongst these she counted not a few friends; but there were others who heartily disliked her, and threw every imaginable obstacle in her way. Madame St. Simon pretended to look loftily down on her young rival, declared their styles did not correspond, and never appeared on nights when Irene did; and infinite were the scenes of rebellion and confusion caused by her among the *corps dramatique*, which the manager had to soothe, threaten, and force into tranquillity, favouring the rivals alternately, both being too important to be sacrificed, and the one being as high-spirited as the other was unreasonable, and all the other performers siding vehemently with one or the other. Irene now knew why Mrs. Dalzell had shrunk from such a life for her, but usually she considered her profession as apart from all these vexations, loved it thoroughly, and, dauntless and hopeful, rose lightly above vexations and difficulties; or at worst was only dispirited till she had talked them over with Vincenzo.

Illness brings out the feminine side of a man's character, and this was probably the explanation of Vincenzo's peculiar feelings towards his sister. Irene's

hopes, Irene's future, were his own. Whatever concerned her touched him; on her was centred a devoted, unselfish love, which was beyond price. Another might love her more passionately, but none could do so better than Vincenzo. Their parts had been reversed in life — the sister took the active share; the brother regarded her with a woman's devotion. He had felt only happiness in her engagement to Leone; which would give her a protector and secure her happiness. Vincenzo's feeling on this subject never varied. Irene was ever his chief thought; he knew all about her companions, her difficulties at the theatre, as well as she did herself. Every one of her parts was studied with him; he was the most patient of critics, and as there were sometimes between them the differing opinions and free discussion that elicit truth, she owed not a little to his observations.

Irene had been a good sister. Her temper might be high and impatient with others, but with him never. In the early days of his illness his despondent moods were always met by her with the gentlest patience; she was never too busy or too anxious to idle away as much time beside his sofa as he liked; she never let her own affairs engross her or trouble him when he was unfit for them. Those who only saw her outside Vincenzo's room, could never have guessed how tender and patient the mirthful high-spirited girl could be; in truth, her buoyant temperament was a great blessing both to her and to Vincenzo, who needed a gayer spirit to make sunshine for him — he enjoyed it as a chilly invalid does a summer's day. None, however, could now call him despondent or irritable. Mrs. Dalzell saw that he had found out the solution of the

problem that had harassed him; he was in truth contented with his lot, but neither she nor Irene guessed how sharp had been the contests he had fought and won between those four walls where his life seemed destined to be passed. He need hardly have wished Irene to have any protector but himself; though their natural position in life had been exchanged, she thoroughly trusted his judgment and put entire confidence in him, and her affection for him was so great that it was wonderful how Leone contrived to steal any of it away. Perhaps, however, the best proof of how much he had obtained, was her fear lest Vincenzo should fancy he was less to her in any way than before. But hers was a generous young heart, quite capable of containing brother and lover and her art besides: it knew nothing of that kind of selfish absorption into one person, which sometimes seems to make the family of a bride nothing to her in comparison with the new love. Leone could not have been Leone had he grudged to share her with Vincenzo, his tried friend, with whom had been divided all the perils of the past eventful years. They had risked their lives, hand in hand, as it were, for the same great object, the object which had been Leone's boyish dream and the aim of his manhood, the independence of Italy. With years his course of thought had advanced, deepened, widened, but never varied. The dream of a strong mind becomes a purpose, an action—and life had not smiled so softly on him as to lull him into forgetfulness. He lived with the knowledge that, sooner or later, for this cherished hope he must suffer, and he had not breathed a word that could link Irene's fate to his own till the

dangerous time had passed and the new reign changed all things.

Leone might be looked on as the leader of a large party, who demanded first the freedom of Italy, then gradual reform, and stood between the Republicans and the Gregoriani, as those were called who had made fortunes under the old reign, detested each change as if it had been a new heresy, and were under Austrian influence. These and the ultra-liberals unconsciously worked together, and spread discontent even among the perpetual feasts and processions which now had become almost a necessity to the Romans, whose southern nature, and the training of nearly two thousand years, made triumphs and demonstrations and excitement meat and drink to them. The same nature disposed them to plots, lotteries, and games of chance; they had grown accustomed to conspiracy under preceding Popes, and all the horrible executions, fines, and imprisonments only smothered the flame in one place to make it break out more widely in another, and induced a cowardly ferocity, instead of the brave, firm spirit which alone ennobles a people. Already, there were evil symptoms; the temporizing, cautious reforms aroused suspicion, the bad harvests excited discontent, though Pio Nono's charity at the time of distress spread his personal popularity, if possible, wider than ever. The Gregoriani fanned the discontent for one end, the ultra-liberals for another; pamphlets and papers, advocating violent measures, began to be widely circulated, printed either secretly or under the kind of demi-freedom granted to the press; and there were tumults in the provinces, and the general hatred for

the priests, especially for the Jesuits, began to show itself. Already the cry had been heard in the streets, "Death to the Neri! Long live the Bianchi!" old names which began to be applied to the Priests and the Liberals; there was an electric thrill abroad, but Pio Nono was still in the height of his popularity; still the crowds flocked to the Quirinal to receive his blessing from the balcony; still when he visited the provinces, he was received with indescribable enthusiasm; the families to whom the amnesty had given back beloved relations blessed him, and a new and sincere spirit of devotion prevailed at Rome. The people had been so much oppressed under preceding reigns that every improvement, however small, was received as if it came straight from heaven; how much more such an unexpected and extensive reformation as that which began with the rule of Pio Nono?

Public events touched Irene and Vincenzo only as they did every Roman of every class. All took a lively interest in them, and parties ran high; but as yet no hearth or home was troubled by the course they took. Leone had an active share in them, and daily brought reports of all that was passing, but both he and Irene had a livelihood to win, and were fully occupied. There was a prospect of their marriage. If Leone could rise to a higher post in the Dateria, his salary would justify him in taking a wife; he had not hitherto been able to afford such a luxury, and all the money he and his friends could muster had been spent in printing and circulating their writings.

Mrs. Dalzell, who thought that Irene gave herself too little relaxation, made her come out with her whenever a vigil closed the theatres, and gave at once a

holiday to the actors and time for serious thought to the public. One afternoon she proposed to visit the Corsini Gardens, where, as it chanced, she had never been. She had been interested by what she heard of Imelda Olivetti, and proposed to Irene to take her with them. Irene was uncertain, she doubted whether Signora Olivetti would consent. She did not believe any one but an Englishwoman would have proposed such a thing; a Roman would have been afraid of the responsibility.

"My dear, what responsibility?"

"Oh, a girl might make some acquaintance, or get into mischief. I know the padrona would say, 'If such a one asked me to take her daughter *a far due passi*, I would; but for proposing it myself—*giusto!*'"

"I wonder if all Italians are as good mimics as you and the padrona?" said Mrs. Dalzell, laughing; "you all act by nature, I believe."

"Yes, when I see the English, I perceive that they keep their hands still, they do not raise their voices. I could not say two words in that wooden way; and even Vincenzo, though he is so English, has fingers that speak like ours, instead of being silent like yours. As for acting, you know girls are taught to recite, just as they are to work."

"To work, my dear! Menica has just told me she cannot mend this hole in my skirt."

"Oh, she is poor. Mistresses do not like a girl to work; they say, if she works well, she sits idle like a lady, and does nothing else. But girls in the upper classes have a mistress to teach them—Imelda has one, and Gemma too; you know she brought in her frame yesterday."

"That is another peculiarity of yours. You do plain work with a cushion, and what you call *Broderie Anglaise* in a frame, but in England embroidery has long been out of fashion—I dare say we shall have it back some day."

"Do you know that we express very good plain work by saying 'It is sewn like an Englishwoman's work.' Imelda made teaching me to embroider an excuse for our meetings, and I taught her English, and Signora Olivetti liked that, or I hardly suppose she would have let us be intimate, for I am a Protestant, and—though that is not so bad—an actress," said Irene, raising her graceful head with smiling pride. "But the Olivetti have rather taken the liberal side; they pique themselves on enlightened opinions. They were once in England, and the signora talks about English education, and has kept Imelda at home, and given her a very good one; she has learnt French, and work, and geography, and history, and music."

"I thought you all learnt music?"

"Oh, not thoroughly; that is an English mistake. But there are very good voices and correct ears among the Romans. You ought to go to the Philharmonic. Signora Olivetti has never let Imelda be out of her sight; they go very little into society, but she is rather a friend of Madame Marriotti's, and that is how they came to be there. The other night, Gemma went with them; she has such a good voice that Madame Marriotti is glad to have her; though, if you asked her," said Irene, putting on precisely the little fairy's expression, "she would say, 'Oh; I can't bear the girl, and I know she hates me; but then, in a way I like any one who sings as she does.' So now we will see if Signora

Olivetti's liberality extends to letting us have Imelda, but I shall wonder very much if she says yes."

Signora Olivetti, however, graciously consented, perhaps prepossessed by Mrs. Dalzell's appearance; and the pretty Imelda joined them, blushing and trembling with shyness and delight at so unusual an expedition.

Mrs. Dalzell found her Italian more available than Imelda's English, as she did not mind making mistakes, and Imelda did, and after every phrase looked at Irene, to see if it were correct.

They took their way towards Ponte Sisto, Mrs. Dalzell observing, "I said the carriage should come for us, but it will be pleasanter to walk there."

Imelda said, "*Si, signora,*" and no more, till presently she whispered, "Are we not walking very fast?"

"Not for English people," said Irene. "Are you afraid that some one should see you? The other day, Madama Cecchi spoke to me seriously about the pace at which I walk, and said it was really shocking, and yet here is Mrs. Dalzell hardly able to go slow enough for us."

"Ah!" said Imelda, with a sudden flush of bright pleasure, as, raising her little hand in the air, she fluttered her fingers in greeting to some one in a carriage full of gentlemen. One of them lifted his hat as they drove by, and Irene said, "Ah, Luigi Ravelli."

It sent a pang to Mrs. Dalzell's kind heart to see how that momentary meeting had lighted up the young girl's sweet, childlike face; fate had surely dealt hardly with her in linking one so affectionate and inexperienced to a man who deemed marriage with her almost the worst evil that could befall him.

"You have known Signor Ravelli all your life?" she asked.

"Always. He was the same age as a brother of mine who died. Carlo was very fond of him, and while they were both in education, they, and others, used constantly to go with their *Pedante* to play in a large garden, which we have, some way from our house, and then they were together in papa's studio."

"I am afraid I don't know what a *Pedante* means."

Imelda looked as much abashed as if the want of comprehension had been hers, and Irene came to her aid.

"You know people don't like their sons to go to and from school alone, or to walk by themselves; so they have some one, who is called a *Pedante*, who takes charge of several boys, and walks out with them on Sundays and *festas*."

"How long are boys kept under this surveillance?"

"Till thirteen or fourteen."

Mrs. Dalzell thought of English schoolboys.

"And you used to meet in the garden, signorina?" she continued.

"Oh no," said Imelda, scandalized. "I used to go there with mamma at other times—never when the boys were there. Oh, Irene, do you hear?"

A door was open, and a mother was lulling her child to rest with Leone's hymn. They had reached the bridge, and stopped to look at the view, perhaps the most beautiful of all those seen from the Roman bridges. Looking towards the hills, the Tiber was spanned by Ponte Rotto, under which the old black mills were turning ceaselessly, almost level with the tawny water; the sunshine fell full on the ruins of the

Palatine, about the base of which had gathered a crowd of modern buildings; a brick Campanile, of the middle ages, rose high above them against the blue sky, which was seen through its open arches; beyond, were the Latin Hills; on the other hand, St. Peter's stood pre-eminent in the distance; nearer, a stack of picturesque old houses were half hidden by orange trees, where golden fruit clustered thickly; women leant from the windows, long lines of flapping clothes hung out to dry; below, the ferry boat was crossing the river, impelled by the current—modern and ancient Rome all mingled together—everywhere were thrilling names connected with all that was most glorious in the past. The moderns are richer than their ancestors, the past is theirs as well as the present!

Mrs. Dalzell thought of the past; Irene, as she listened to the young mother's singing, thought of the future. They were aroused at last by perceiving that a respectable middle-aged man was regarding them with extreme perplexity; he looked up the river towards the Palatine, down to Monte Mario—still he could see nothing that explained the pause and interest of the ladies, and after another steadfast look at them and at the river, he gave an audible grunt of dissatisfied marvel, and walked on. They moved too, Mrs. Dalzell saying, "A worthy man, not given to poetry. What part do such as he take in politics?"

Irene looked back at him. "An artisan, tolerably well off, discontented with things as they are, but not ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of improving them. There is little patriotism in such as he."

"Do you know him?" asked Imelda, wondering.

"Not in the least, but I know how his class feel."

"I wish I were as old and as clever as you. Signor Nota tells you about these things," said Imelda, with a sigh, in which there was no envy, but a consciousness that Ravelli did not think her worthy of discussing politics with him. "I remember I have heard papa and Signor Ravelli talk of—What *can* that be?"

They stopped in great alarm at the frightful shrieks which burst from a house in the bye street where they now were. A few people were gathered about the door, where a hired carriage was waiting; there was compassion on their faces, and Irene learned that a child had been killed by an accident, and that now it was to be carried away to the church, but the mother would not believe it was dead, nor allow it to be touched. The hysterical screams were appalling. Imelda shrank close to Mrs. Dalzell, but Irene exclaimed, "I will be back directly," and went into the house.

No effect ensued, the crowd thickened, then a murmur was heard among those on the outside, and all turned eagerly to a priest, who walked straight through them, and disappeared into the house. Mrs. Dalzell had instantly recognised him, and the manner in which the people repeated his name told how well it was known. Gradual silence followed his presence in the house of mourning; next, several men came out bearing a bier covered with a pall on which was a silver cross, and a few women followed, holding lighted candles; the little corpse was placed in the carriage, all the men present took off their hats in solemn homage to the presence of death, probably the first token of respect the pauper child had ever received. It was a touching sight, though there was no ceremony, no brown-robed friars with waxen tapers and chanted

psalms; the carriage drove away, the crowd dispersed, except a few who lingered to catch another glimpse of Padre Rinaldi. The silence that had succeeded the passionate grief struck cold on the heart. Mrs. Dalzell breathed more freely when Irene re-appeared, pale, indeed, but composed. Evidently no new misfortune had occurred.

"Irene! how could you go in?" exclaimed Imelda, hurrying her on.

"I could not help it. One could not pass by without trying to do something, but it was useless, there was a frightful scene till Padre Rinaldi came—the poor mother tore her hair, and shrieked like one possessed, and when she saw him she threw herself at his feet, entreating that her boy might not be taken away and thrown into a pit like a dog. But he quieted her instantly, I cannot tell how; and very soon she let them take the body. He is there still, but she was quite meek and patient even before I came away, though she was really like a wild beast before he entered."

"How could you go in? I should have been so much afraid," repeated Imelda.

"One must try to do something when people want help," said Irene; "don't talk of it any more, I want to think of something else."

"Here is the Corsini Palace," said Imelda, obedient as a child; "are we to go into the Cortile?"

"Is this as new to you as to me?" asked Mrs. Dalzell; "are you as ignorant of Rome as Irene used to be?"

"I know the churches, signora. We often go into one when we go out."

"She knows nothing about Rome, Mrs. Dalzell," said Irene. "You must learn to understand there are two Romes, I don't mean Pagan and Christian, but one for foreigners and one for natives, and they don't mix."

"Mamma has been in England," said Imelda, for the first time venturing directly to address Mrs. Dalzell; "she liked it much. She has told me about it. You have seen the tunnel under the Thames?"

Mrs. Dalzell was obliged to confess that she had not, and Imelda thought this quite as extraordinary as did the English lady the little Italian's ignorance of Rome.

"There is one thing besides that I should very much like to see," she added, "a Quaker. Mamma has a picture of a male and a female Quaker; they have brown dresses and a curious hat and cap. Do they belong to some confraternity?"

Mrs. Dalzell found the Society of Friends so difficult a subject that she wished William Penn would arise and speak for himself; but her attempts at explanation were cut short by the appearance of a magnificent porter in cocked hat and grand livery, who conducted them across the quadrangle, unlocked the ponderous iron gates of the gardens, and let the visitors through, leaving them to their own devices, and closing and locking the gates with a clash. They now stood in a wide avenue of ilex, whose gloomy boughs, interlacing overhead, effectually excluded the sunlight; nearly a quarter of a mile further on, the ilexes were replaced by box and bay trees, beneath which sun and shade divided the path between them, trembling and flickering on the ground and invading each other's

dominions with every breath of wind. The ladies heard the plash of fountains as they walked onwards by banks precipitous as a hill-side, and covered with wild rank herbage and tall trees. Mrs. Dalzell stooped to gather a flower, and almost started, as looking up, she saw, rising against a sky fabulously blue, the unfamiliar grey ilex and dark cypress spire. She said it was so delightful to be in Rome again, that she marvelled afresh whenever she thus realized that she was actually there. Irene told her that in spring tide, the grassplats were perfectly clouded with violets, and asked Imelda if she recollected gathering some in a particularly pleasant expedition to the Villa Borghese.

"Do you make an exception in favour of violet scent, signorina?" inquired Mrs. Dalzell.

"They are not *so* disagreeable," replied the little Roman.

Some discussion followed, concerning the love and language of flowers at Venice, perhaps brought there from the East, and Irene expressed her great wish to visit the Queen of the Adriatic. Imelda had never travelled further from home than Albano, and wondered if she ever should; Mrs. Dalzell suggested a wedding tour.

"Oh, but," said Imelda, "I am sure Signor Ravelli would not let Luigi go far away. Perhaps he might allow him to go as far as L'Arriccia, and then we should come back and live with Signor and Signora Ravelli. Luigi has always wanted to travel; he would like to have gone far away, as Count Clementi has done, but they say he is too young."

Mrs. Dalzell knew him to be at least three-and-twenty, and as high spirited and manly a youth as any

in Rome. She smiled, and asked if he were not busy in his profession, and whether the count had none.

"Oh no, he is noble," said Imelda.

"Yes, that really is a reason," said Irene, rather to Mrs. Dalzell than to Imelda; "you cannot expect our nobles to put their sons into professions, when the highest offices are closed against all but ecclesiastics."

"Oh, a noble cannot have an *impiego*," said Imelda. "Has the signora seen Gemma Clementi? She always says that, when she marries, she must see Paris and London, and that she will not live with a mother-in-law. She is so strange! Mamma says she must have been brought up badly, for she would not marry the husband whom her uncle chose for her! She saw him at Sta. Caterina, where he came one day with her mother, and guessed immediately that he was to be her *sposo;* but she did not object then, because she was so desirous to leave the convent."

"Do girls generally dislike the convent?"

"No," said Irene, "many are very fond of the nuns, and when they first come out they all say they shall return and take the veil; but Gemma was always in trouble. Do you know what the usual punishment is for a naughty girl? While the others are dining, she has to kneel all the time in the middle of the room, and there dines alone; and Gemma was too proud to bear this. Once she fainted outright, and they were afraid to punish her after that."

"I wonder if that girl would have been different under different management," said Mrs. Dalzell, musingly.

"So she came home," continued Imelda, "but the first time the marchese came she hid behind a curtain;

and the next, when the contessa sent for her, she had gone to bed; then her uncle was very angry, and said she should go back to Sta. Caterina; yet, when next the marchese spent the evening with them, and he wished her good evening, Gemma said, 'You need not come again, for I detest you, and will never marry you—a happy evening;' and he went away, and soon after he died."

"Of grief?"

"No, it was influenza; he was very old: but is it not strange of Gemma? Mamma has not let me see much of her; I never heard of such a thing before, except in an English book."

Irene looked mischievous, and Mrs. Dalzell perceived that such things did sometimes happen, even in Rome. She asked what the English book was.

"One that Irene had; we began it when she gave me English lessons; it was about a youth who married without his mother's consent; but mamma said we had better not read it, because it was wrong even to think of such things; it might happen in England, but Catholics would never do so."

"I hope it is as uncommon in England as among Roman Catholics," said Mrs. Dalzell, with some emphasis; but, perceiving by Irene's startled look that she was on dangerous ground, she added, "Now, suppose we go on; I should like to go up to that fountain."

A wide flight of steps lay before them, ending in a stone platform; another similar flight succeeded, with a fountain above it, on either side of which were about six narrow and steep steps; the water came tumbling down over a succession of miniature terraces into a

basin, whence it disappeared under ground. Low walls closed in the steps and platforms, crowned by vases full of aloes, whose stiff yet graceful leaves rose like a crown above them. Mrs. Dalzell and the two girls sat down on the lowest of the little steps by the fountain; Irene bared her arm and reached through the dashing water for maidenhair fern to fringe the bouquet which Mrs. Dalzell had collected, and they sat in pleasant idleness and silence, lulled by the sound of the waters, whose reflection waved on the ground amid the shadows flung by two gigantic plane trees, which leant forward into the blue air all suffused with sunshine; their huge roots had almost shattered the walls beside which they grew. Behind, cypresses, ilexes, and other trees, formed a background; below lay the far-reaching gardens, divided by dark hedges into a main avenue, and a succession of formal squares, each containing a grassplat and a fountain, throwing up silver plumes with a murmur lost in distance. The white arcades of the palace rose beyond the high iron trellises, but not a living creature was visible about it—all was so still, so deserted, so untrimmed, and yet so lovely, that it might have been the domain of the Sleeping Beauty. Mrs. Dalzell said so, and found that Imelda did not understand, whereupon she gave an outline of the fairy tale to Irene, and bade her tell it to the signorina in Italian, which she did, filling it up with such poetical embellishments as made Mrs. Dalzell listen with as much interest as if it had been a new story, and wonder if the power of improvisation were inherent in all the children of the south, or if it were only part of Irene's artist temperament.

"Do you know who the Sleeping Beauty is, Imelda?"

asked Irene, after a pause. "She is Italy! She has been laid in a magic trance; and by an evil, not a good fairy, and now is about to wake."

Imelda had listened, with the utmost attention, and now asked if English girls read such tales? Mrs. Dalzell found that she could not explain what English story-books were, and asked what were Imelda's favourites; expecting, from Irene's assertion, that her friend had been well educated, that "Dante," or "D'Azeglio," might be the answer. After some consideration came a reply.

"I have read the *History of Rome*."

"But you don't read that for amusement?"

"No," Imelda replied, evidently uncertain what she did read for amusement. "Mamma says that when I am married I may read romances. Gemma reads them now—in French. I want to read some that mamma has, translated from the English; they are written by the Signor Gualtiero Scott, a *cavaliere*, I think he was. Luigi likes them."

"Ah! you heard us discussing them!" said Irene.

"Yes, I know he liked them; and Signor Nota said Grossi's books owed a great deal to them; but I could not understand, as I never read them nor those of Grossi; I cannot talk as you do," said Imelda, remembering how Ravelli had turned to Irene when he found that she understood what he was talking of. "But some day I shall read a great deal if Luigi will let me."

Mrs. Dalzell was so much attracted by the innocent look and manner, that she took the young girl's hand and said, "I am quite sure that he will wish it, and you will find a great many English books that you

will think very pleasant reading. Three years ago Irene read as little as you; when you are as old, I dare say you will know as much."

"It would please me," said Imelda, looking up at Irene with a shy smile; and Mrs. Dalzell wondered whether Ravelli really could be indifferent to this engaging child; perhaps it might be that he was too young himself to feel the charm of her affection and simplicity; and one older, whose love was more vehement and less attainable, might easily bewitch him more. She was occupied by grave musings as to how the entanglement would end, and whether Signora Olivetti were blind to the true state of the case; and she said little more till roused by the voices of a party of men, going past on the road, behind and below the gardens, towards the gate of San Pancrazio. They were singing in parts, with great spirit, and once more it was Leone's hymn. Irene heard with a thrill of proud delight; as the voices died away in the distance, she rose and pointed to the hills, whence the last sunset tints were vanishing. The city was fast melting into blue twilight, if indeed twilight can be said to exist in Italy; a fire-fly darted past and vanished in the ilexes. It was indeed time to go; and as they slowly walked back to the gates, darkness came on so fast that only voices close at hand revealed that others were in the garden though unseen. "Leone!" murmured Irene, and they distinguished, the next moment, what he was saying. "Out with the barbarians! let reforms wait; though, if ever they were needed, we need them; but, before all things, let us be free; let us devote ourselves to driving out the Austrians—our soil has been trampled by them far too long."

"Right!" answered a voice, whose deep music came thrilling on the ear; "freedom we seek for; without freedom religion is oppressed, but without religion, liberty becomes anarchy."

He paused, perceiving he had other auditors besides Leone; Mrs. Dalzell stood once more face to face with Padre Rinaldi. Imelda kissed his hand, and he told Irene that he had left the poor mother calm and resigned. Leone had not heard of the incident, which Irene briefly explained as they walked back through the quadrangle, where Padre Rinaldi took leave of them, and they paused an instant to watch his tall figure disappear in the thickening shades of the Lung' Ara, before they got into the carriage which stood waiting for them.

"I should hardly have expected to find many of your acquaintances among the priests, Leone," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"I have more enemies than friends among them."

"Oh, Signor Nota!" said Imelda.

"She is thinking of our Roman saying," said Irene, "The vengeance of a priest endures to the seventh generation!"

"That is a terrible proverb, Irene," said Mrs. Dalzell, startled.

"You will often hear it quoted, signora; but Padre Rinaldi is an exception even among the good men of his profession; and there are many excellent, devoted priests, but very few who have broken the bonds of circumstance sufficiently to be reformers. I am proud to be called his friend; there is not a man on earth more truly Italian in heart than he. When I meet with one of that stamp, I could fall on my knees before

him; for none can conceive the enormous yoke of past precedent and authority which a priest has to shake off before he can think for himself and dare to be a patriot."

"I am afraid of him," half whispered Imelda; "he always seems to know what I am thinking of."

"What would Signor Ravelli say to that, signorina?"

Imelda smiled and whispered to Irene, "I am sure Padre Rinaldi would say I am too silly to be Luigi's wife; I always feel so when I hear Luigi or the padre talking of politics, but I like to listen."

"Yes, I know you do," answered Irene, laughing and sighing; "you are very patriotic when Ravelli talks of Italy."

They left Imelda at her own dwelling, and returned to Palazzo Clementi. Irene had scarcely entered the sitting-room, and began to detail their adventures to Vincenzo, before Leone, who had lingered to speak to Mrs. Dalzell, came in with a joyous, bounding step, and exclaimed, "I have news for you; I kept it till you were both together."

He stood where he could see the faces of both brother and sister, Vincenzo lying on a sofa, Irene seated in a low chair beside him. Both looked up smiling and inquiring, as if catching a vision of good news from his own glad face.

"Farini is to be promoted," he said; then pausing to see what effect the announcement would have. Farini was the man who held a post in the *Dateria* just above him. An exclamation escaped Irene, she coloured brightly, and looked up with eager anxiety. Vincenzo held closer the hand she had just put into his,

as he answered, "That is news worth hearing, Leone! Now you are sure of a step!"

"It will certainly be hard if I do not get it, after keeping my post by miracle all this time! Assunta's husband must almost have worn out his interest in protecting me; I know he thinks it was for his sins that he ever was cursed with a liberal brother-in-law! Yes, I must have Farini's post unless some one is raised over my head, and I don't think fortune will play me such a trick. It has not been officially announced yet; but we all know that Farini is to have a rise, and I, for one, am quite ready to congratulate him. And then, Irene?" he added, playfully, but his dark eyes spoke eloquently as he looked at her.

She had laid her head on Vincenzo's shoulder, and it was he who answered, putting the hand he had been holding into Leone's, "If she has nothing to say, I have, Leone; I make her over to you," and Irene did not object.

It was important news. Leone, when raised a step in his business, would be able to afford to marry. They had repeatedly calculated the chances of such good fortune, and yet it was startling when it did come. Irene sat almost silent, with a sweet, serious look, as Leone spoke of the future; Vincenzo answered more warmly than she did, but Irene never said much when most happy. Leone knew her of old, and he looked anything but dissatisfied. Vincenzo did not feel himself in their way; both looked to him for sympathy, almost as much as to each other, and he was deeply sensible of the delicacy that had prompted Leone to withhold this news, till he could share it with him as well as with Irene.

After awhile Irene rose to seek Nanna, who had grown very infirm of late, so much so, that she was quite unable to escort Irene to and from the theatre or to Madame Marriotti's house, near as it was; and she had been superseded in this office by an elderly person, whom Madama Cecchi knew and could trust; to the great displeasure of the old nurse, though she had grumbled whenever obliged to go. She had taken Irene's betrothal greatly to heart, Leone was no favourite of hers, he had never given her a paul in his life; he was poor and not noble; Nanna considered that Irene was throwing herself away, and would have felt that she was doing her young mistress a kindness by preventing such a marriage. It was such a straightforward thing too! Nanna would so have enjoyed a little mystery; it was hard that Irene would never give her a chance of carrying notes or messages, and making a *scudo* or two by them!

Irene had really suffered not a little during the past year from Nanna's increasing ill-humour; but she bore with her for the sake of her past services, and even turned as deaf an ear as she could when Nanna gave a slap at Leone.

Influenza had been prevalent at Rome that autumn, the fatal Roman *grippa;* Madama Cecchi had had it, the servants had been laid up with it; there was a mortality in the city, though no one in Palazzo Clementi had yet died of it. Nanna had been complaining all the last week, and had become strangely altered. She was more bent and haggard, her coffee-coloured skin had assumed a ghastly hue, and the severe bleeding, which was the favourite remedy for *grippa*, had drained away all her strength. Irene found her out of spirits

and hardly appearing to hear her cheerful greeting. She sat down by her, and told her where she had spent the afternoon, but Nanna's head was wandering after other matters, and presently she muttered, "You will be going to marry him soon, *figlia!*" Irene almost believed that she must have been thinking aloud, and asked quickly, "Who told you that, Nanna?"

The old woman looked up sharply, her dimmed eyes brightened, and it was with her old look of mingled coaxing and cunning that she answered: "I know, I know, my darling—when is it to be?"

"I cannot quite tell you, Nanna, but Leone is to have a better post in the *Dateria* soon, and then I suppose—I hope—we shall be able to marry. Say you are glad, dear nurse, you have always been so kind to me!"

"Ay, *figlia.* I am glad, to be sure; and so you are very happy?" said Nanna, passing her wrinkled hand over the glossy braids of Irene's hair. "So my darling is to be married!—ah, well—well!"

Irene stayed a little while longer and left her looking quite alive again, so much so, that as soon as she was alone, she hobbled to the door, peered out till assured that no one was near, and then went across to the apartment of the Contessa Clementi.

CHAPTER XIII.

Chi luogo e tempo aspetta,
Vede alfin la sua vendetta.
Proverb.

WHATEVER might be the information conveyed by Nanna, it was forwarded immediately by Gemma to her brother, but he did not write to her in return, and

nearly a fortnight elapsed uneventfully. The days were at their shortest, darkness had come down on the palace, the fountain murmured in the quadrangle, the corridors were wrapped in gloom. A little spot of red light, glowing through one of the high grated windows of the Contessa Clementi's apartment, showed that candles had been lighted within. The contessa and her daughter sat together—the former, a frail invalid, leaning in her arm-chair, her white thin hand resting on a book of prayers, which lay on a table beside her, her feet on a kind of stool filled with hot charcoal. There was no fire nor stove in the large dreary room, which was only lighted by a single candle on the table; heavy red curtains draped the windows and doors; along the walls stood large ancient chairs of black wood, much gilt, whereon many generations of Clementi had sat; a piano was the only modern piece of furniture.

Opposite to her mother sat Gemma, like her, wrapped in a shawl. She was at work on some rich material, embroidered with gold thread, stiff with decoration, and doubtless intended as a mantle for some image of the Virgin. The table was half covered with gold and silver thread and patterns; her needle moved fast, less as if it were a labour of love than a vent for concealed impatience; and she scarcely made any response when her mother's querulous voice uttered, from time to time, complaints of her daughter's unsociability.

"I was just as well off when you were in the convent, Gemma," said she; "I thought when you came home I should have a companion, but I find your aunt is right in thanking Heaven that she has no daughters."

"She has certainly not the trouble of marrying them," answered Gemma, without lifting her eyes from the golden flowers that grew fast upon her work.

"There again, Gemma, you might have been well married, you would have been a widow now, with a good fortune, if you had not been so perverse. Who do you suppose will marry a girl with no money, and what is to become of you when I am dead?"

"It does not matter," answered the girl, half aloud and tapping her foot on the floor.

"What are you saying? I cannot hear a word. I wish Pietrucchio would write or come home, I miss him dreadfully; and I cannot understand what this journey means, or where the money to travel with comes from, or what he is about, mixing himself up with these low people; but as long as his uncle is satisfied, I am. I do insist, Gemma, that you show yourself more respectful towards your uncle. Recollect that he can send you back to Sta. Caterina when he pleases."

"I almost wish I were there," said Gemma, breaking her thread in utter impatience, but not speaking loud enough to be heard. "May I go to my aunt?" she asked, standing up.

"Your aunt does not want you; she has visitors, or she would have come here. Why are you in a hurry to go? When I was a girl, I sat all day at my work, and never wanted to leave my mother's side; but as for you, you are always desirous to leave me."

"You did very well without me for a good many years, mamma," said Gemma, thinking to herself that she had not been brought up to find a mother her natural companion.

"That is a reason why you should make up for it the more now; you were noble, your uncle got admittance at Sta. Caterina for you, like other girls of your rank; we could not afford to send you to the Sacro Cuore. You learn these strange ideas from Mademoiselle Mori, I suppose."

"There is my uncle," said Gemma, who had been listening attentively to the sound of a carriage driving into the quadrangle, and now caught the sound of approaching steps.

"Your uncle? he must have come on business—I hope you have got on with that work, or he will be displeased," said the contessa, rising feebly but hastily to receive the relation who ruled the whole family with despotic power. A liveried servant, who, when in his undress, enacted the parts of both cook and housemaid in the establishment, threw open the door, and announced Monsignore Clementi, and an ecclesiastic entered, saluted his sister-in-law, suffered Gemma to kiss his hand, and seated himself in one of the ponderous chairs which the footman had placed for him near the table. A short and solemn pause ensued; the contessa looked nervous and anxious; Gemma resumed her work, but a ray of hope lit the eyes which she occasionally turned towards the door.

Monsignore Clementi was, like a hundred other men of his age and position, of middle stature, with a large, bald forehead, and dark eyes, small and astute, a face at once self-indulgent and shrewd, a figure inclined to corpulence, but not without a certain dignity.

The silence remained unbroken till he said, with a glance at Gemma, "By and by I shall have something to say to you, my dear sister."

"Instantly," replied the contessa, in evident trepidation. "Gemma, it is growing late—your uncle permits you to retire."

"A happy night, my dear uncle," said Gemma, again kissing his hand; then she saluted her mother, and left the room. A few moments after she returned to another door leading into it, listened for a moment with a look of the bitterest scorn to her uncle's voice laying down the law, and the hasty and submissive replies of her mother, and then softly glided into the ante-room. The next instant she stood outside in the corridor, glancing fearfully up and down with a guilty look. No one was in sight, and with swift steps she hurried down the first flight of stairs, pausing in the midst of the darkness on the landing-place. A voice whispered, "I am here," and the hand put out to feel for her, drew her into the angle, where stood, unseen, but not unexpected, Ravelli.

"Ah!" she said, grasping his hand with a sigh of relief, "you are there!"

"I have waited at least an hour; but it was very well you were here no sooner. My princess, do you know that I encountered your reverend uncle? I was in the corridor, and had no resource, except to become your gardener, and be very busy with the orange-trees, and he stopped and bade me look after the garden better. I thought some awkward questions might be coming, but some excellent person called 'Pa,' down below, so I begged his pardon, and answered the summons before 'Pa,' could appear."

He was still overflowing with mirth at his adventure. Gemma broke in impetuously, "Do you know why he came? I can tell you—I should not be here

if he had not come. What a life it is—watched day and night, threatened continually with the convent, or to be sold to some old man, who may be the greatest wretch on earth for ought they care, so long as he is rich. There they are discussing it now—mamma saying, 'Noble of course'—my uncle, 'I have begged Mattei to write me word if he hear of a good match for her; but with her small dowry we must not be too particular.'"

"Let them try to sell you if they dare! Clementi is for us, the times are for us; only do not you give way, Gemma," and his tone was passionately earnest.

"I!" she answered with a low scornful laugh, though she had shivered from head to foot at her brother's name—"I! And you see that the whole world cannot prevent our meeting."

"No, while they are quietly planning your marriage. Fate is hard on us, Gemma, is she not? but we will conquer her yet; yes, all the three Fates. Come the worst, we will try a little poverty together and another country."

"Anywhere! I could breathe more freely in any place but this."

"England, which has sheltered so many exiles? No, too cold and foggy; Spain would do better—Spain, sunnier even than our Italy. I will turn fisherman, and we will have a cottage under the rocks near the blue sea, with vines and fig-trees, and you shall sing to me while I mend my nets, and we will fly away like the swallows, and forget Italy, Gemma."

"You are not in earnest," she replied, sullenly.

"No, I am not in earnest," he returned, with a light laugh, that showed how rapidly vehemence and

carelessness succeeded each other in his gay and variable mind; "I could not forget my old love for my new—Rome held me captive long before you did, Gemma."

"If that's all you have to say, I may as well go back," she answered, seeking to free her hands, which he held fast, exclaiming, "Silly child! who knows when we may be able to meet again? Do you think I shall let you go in this way? Stay, I am in earnest, quite in earnest now; suppose this marriage project come to anything, what are we to do?"

"You had better marry Imelda Olivetti."

"They shall fish me drowned out of the Tiber first. What do I know of a child whom I never see except by her mother's side? Let my father answer it to the Olivetti as he can—I have told him, as plainly as I can speak, that I do not feel myself bound by this—this family project. I know one who would marry us, Gemma, if it comes to the point; there is always that resource, let what will come after."

"I am ready," was her reply.

He uttered some ardent words of gratitude. "But why," he added, "why do you always protest against my speaking to your brother? Do you think he does not see that I love you? Clementi not see it! he who sees everything; why he has countenanced it by seeming not to see."

"No, don't trust—don't—don't—oh, put yourself in no one's power, trust no one," she whispered fast and low.

"Not even you?"

"You do trust me?" asked Gemma, suspiciously, and bitterly repenting what she had said.

"Yes, I trust you, Gemma," answered Ravelli, with momentary sternness; for, blind as his love was, he felt that one so well practised in deceiving others might one day deceive him also. "I trust you; and take care you do not cheat me, for if you do I will never trust man nor woman more, and never forgive it!"

For a moment all was storm in Gemma's mind. She had rarely heard that tone on the lips of the light-hearted Luigi, and she exclaimed, "If you loved me, you would not speak so. I know you would cast me off, if you thought my brother was a Papista."

"Have I done so because you are the niece of Monsignore Clementi? Do you think I don't know what he is, with his spies in every *café!* What is that to me, while you are my own Gemma?" said Ravelli, instantly repenting, as he perceived how much moved she was.

"Hush! hush!" she whispered in terror, shrinking close to him, as a step became audible on the stairs. "Who can be coming? Oh, let me go!"

Instead of releasing her, Ravelli clasped her fast and close; they held their breath, as a ray of light came up and illuminated a little space around—the intruder had a lamp! All her courage scarcely enabled her to remain still, though, like Ravelli, she had remembered that her own door would be closed, and to be found standing outside would be as fatal as being discovered on the stairs. They drew back into the furthest corner, her face hidden against him, and his arm thrown protectingly around her, as he watched, with a defiant look, for the new comer. The light increased and came nearer, but they still stood in deep shadow. Some one wrapped in a cloak passed, without

casting a glance around, and the sound of his steps died away in the corridor. Ravelli muttered a thanksgiving, but Gemma seemed still stupified with alarm, and bade him imperiously to let her go. "Giorgio will open the door, I am sure—don't keep me one moment," she repeated, as Ravelli urged caution and sought to fix another meeting, and the next instant she had flown down the corridor, and throwing something against a window, leant against the wall, waiting in great impatience till the servant opened the door, peeped out, and admitted her.

"Signorina, signorina, do you know that the count has returned?" he whispered.

"I know," said Gemma, "I heard his step," and she immediately went into her mother's room. Clementi was there, so was monsignore his uncle, by whom, perhaps, the nephew's arrival was not wholly unexpected, and there appeared to be no want of cordiality between them, though rumour said that they had been at daggers drawn, ever since the young count had openly taken the popular side.

Gemma met her brother with composure that did not betray her inward alarm, and he showed no consciousness of having already seen her, but she knew him too well to be re-assured by this. The contessa was excited into unusual talkativeness by her son's sudden return, and Gemma sat by in silence, growing every moment less able to control herself, till Clementi called her aside. She faced him boldly. His first words were, "I acted on your letter."

They restored all her audacity. "It was worth sending, was it not?"

"Yes. Have you no more to tell me?"

"Nanna is very ill, but there is nothing else new."

"Very good," said Clementi, then looking at her with a rapid, stealthy glance. "The stairs are cold at night." He had seen them! She looked full at him in silence, and he continued, "Be so kind as to be cautious; people may think we lean *too* much on the liberal side;" and he was going back to his seat when she exclaimed, low, but emphatically, "Take care! I should make a dangerous enemy."

"Oh yes," answered Clementi, very quietly, "I have no wish to quarrel with so useful an ally; in fact, neither of us could do without the other at present, only be careful lest, for the honour of the family, I should be obliged to notice the affair."

"You know what *he* came for," said Gemma, with a glance at her uncle. "Mind! no marrying!"

"We agreed on that point long ago; I tell you we cannot afford to play each other false," replied Clementi; "come back, there is no need to say any more."

Monsignore Clementi had no more time for his niece's affairs that night. He remained late, shut up with his nephew, and any one who had caught a glimpse of the two, the old man with his astute face supported on his hand, his keen eyes fixed on his nephew, and his whole attention given to some matter which the younger man was demonstrating with acute and rapid explanations, by the help of the papers which covered the whole table between them—any one who had witnessed this scene would have suspected that Count Pierfrancesco Clementi was giving an account of his mission to the wrong party. Nor would they have conjectured amiss.

By birth and education, Clementi belonged to those who for years had oppressed the liberals, and laboured to extinguish every spark of reform with sword, banishment, fine, and imprisonment—of whom it was justly said that they exterminated the liberals without compassion for the tears of women or the cries of children —who organized a vast system of espionage, and caused the Papal Government to be held in abhorrence; while the people became daily more corrupted by the degradation and treachery which such a system generated. This party were losing ground every day; they were in disgrace; those whom they had oppressed, ruled over them, and they necessarily cherished a deadly hatred towards the triumphant side, and the Pope who had caused their own downfall. Their only chance of regaining their ancient power was to drive the people to such excesses as should terrify the friends of reform, and the ultra-liberals aided them but too well.

It was no hope of bettering his fortune, that had led Count Clementi from the ranks of the Neri into the hands of the Bianchi. Three years back he had little foreseen where 1847 would find him. Admiration for Irene had led him to seek the acquaintance of Vincenzo, when he discovered that Nanna could not help him, a fact which she concealed from him as long as possible. The few words which passed in their first meeting, and the book which Vincenzo was studying, instantly showed him what line he must take in order to propitiate her; but far too adroit to feign himself one of a party whom he could hardly be supposed not to detest, he presented himself in the tempting light of a possible convert, allowed Vincenzo to overcome

one prejudice after another, seeking out, at the same time, men known for their liberal opinions, so as to give consistency to his conduct, and finally, deceiving even those most suspicious, and reluctant to trust a *ci-devant* Papista. His was a strange and most subtle nature, full of fiery passions, yet able entirely to conceal them, and waiting for the right moment for months or years before the slightest sign of them was given; and his singularly acute and crafty mind delighted in weaving scheme after scheme, always unweariedly constructing them anew if the threads were broken. To win Irene was the point on which he had centred all his powers. He had instantly divined Nota's feelings towards her, and assured himself that she did not see or think about them; but Nota's long silence was a mystery to him, till it struck him that she must have silenced him, as had been the case with himself the first time he had ventured beyond friendship. He had then instantly drawn back, apparently content to be her friend only. He bided his time. Meanwhile it did not suit him to lose the favour of his uncle, and he found it convenient to be one of the many spies whom Monsignore Clementi privately maintained; and thus —while an absolute breach seemed to have taken place between them, and they ignored each other if they met in public, the secrets of the Bianchi quietly passed into the keeping of the enemy without any suspicion being aroused.

Never had Clementi been more perplexed than when admitted to a knowledge of the secret society founded by Leone. He would gladly have betrayed him, and got rid of him for ever; but he could hardly do so without raising such suspicion as would for ever divide

himself from Irene. The police, however, got scent of the association, and as a preliminary measure, ordered Vincenzo to leave Rome—a step particularly unwelcome to Clementi, who hastened secretly to exert all his interest to annul the order, and succeeded. While they were seeking for further intelligence of the society, Pope Gregory died, and a new reign had begun.

Gemma had been a useful auxiliary to her brother, who was perfectly aware of her connexion with Ravelli, and allowed it on the tacit condition that she should keep up an intimate acquaintance with Irene, to whom he had made her known as soon as she came home from her convent. To her and Nanna he owed the information of Leone's expected promotion, on which he had instantly acted. Gemma knew well what was the price set upon her meetings with Ravelli, and she, moreover, knew Clementi too well to believe he would countenance them a moment longer than he could help. She feared she might have gone a step too far this evening. Often and often she had been on the point of avowing all to Ravelli, but always the double fear of him and of her brother sealed her lips, though the struggle was horrible as she felt the net closing on her, and knew she dared not be true, even to him.

Leone's engagement to Irene had been a blow altogether unexpected by Clementi. In the uncertainty of the time of its termination in marriage, it had never been publicly avowed, and even Nanna had but lately been told of it. To delay such a termination, to wait in hope that time might bring him good fortune, was all that Clementi could do; but he never for a moment doubted his ultimate success. No sleuth hound could have tracked his prey more patiently and obstinately,

or more fiercely than he, and, thoroughly aware of the feelings of both the rival parties in Rome, he foresaw the coming outburst, and perceived that at such a time a rival might easily disappear from the scene. When Leone was gone, Clementi would remain with the claim of a love constant through repulse, older even than Leone's; Irene—the true, frank, loving Irene—must be his at last!

The conversation between the nephew and uncle terminated deep in the night. As Monsignore Clementi rose to go, he said with indifference, "I attended to that affair of young Nota's; you were right to warn me; such as he must be kept down. My people tell me that when he comes into the *cafés*, the young men call out, 'Here is Nota; come, Leone, tell us something of the old times;' and it seems he is an improvisatore. Improvisation ought to be forbidden by law; such as he fill people's heads with treason. He must be looked after."

"Of course, nor would it be well for young Luigi Ravelli to have the Olivetti fortune to add to his own; I would take every opportunity of hindering that marriage."

"We keep an eye upon him also; but mark you, my nephew," said Monsignore Clementi, pausing, with the forefinger of his right hand on the palm of his left —"mark you, such as he are working for us; he throws himself headlong into the arms of the extreme party without seeing where they are rushing. It is they who are our chief auxiliaries. I could count you at this moment how many agents of Mazzini there are in Rome, sent, as you know, first to Paris—supplied there with money—forwarded here. We know their movements

as well as Mazzini himself, but do we interfere with them? No. The times and the extremists are tending one way, let them alone; by-and-bye they will think temporal reforms are not enough, they will attack the spiritual power; and then it is our turn. The tide will turn, but we must let it reach its height first."

"There are few who contemplate the future as calmly as you," said Clementi.

"We raise an outcry as if heaven and earth were coming together, instead of there being every prospect that our power will stand firmer than ever. Pio Nono is above all things a priest; that is what these men have yet to find out; we have not a king at our head, but a Pope; Pio is not Henry VIII. of England. Look at the English Reformation; the Parliament and nation believed they were merely controlling the temporal power of the clergy — how did that end? Do you suppose they foresaw it would land them in Protestantism? Not they; the actors in events never see where they will be carried. Here, let men make this a lay Government, and the spiritual will go too, but it will rise again. It is the moderatists whom we have to dread — men after the Pope's own heart — men like Rossi, who want to go gradually — that would ruin everything."

"The spirit of the times is too strong for them," said Clementi; "they will be carried away by it, like a reed on the Tiber. Once let any Italian state break out into revolution, and the wildfire will spring up here spontaneously. You saw how ready it is to break out by these papers I showed you."

"You will see the flames either in Austria or in Naples before many months pass; I catch their reflec-

tion on the horizon already, Pietrucchio; and, as you say, this Hungarian mission of yours shows what the democrats expect. Yes, Naples will be the first; the people there are held tighter every day, while they see other states, what they call, reforming themselves; our wisdom is to sit still. Good night; of course I shall come here no more while you are at home; you know how to send me any intelligence; be cautious, and keep up a friendship with Nota. That young man has talent, you should buy him over."

"It cannot be done," said Clementi.

"So you have said before, which amounts to this, that you do not know his price. Every man has one; let me tell you there are not six men of my acquaintance, who, if they had to choose between a serious inconvenience and a crime, would not choose the latter. He ought to be on our side; it would shake the liberal cause seriously. There are very few half as formidable as he, for the most part all this outcry is mere noise."

"They complain out of mere want of something else to do," said the count, with undetected irony; for Monsignore Clementi was entirely and truly incapable of perceiving that the laity had even a particle of justice on their side.

"They do. They set themselves up as wiser than those who have inherited the sacred power of our ancestors. But enough of this; good night."

"A happy night, my dear uncle."

Monsignore Clementi descended the stairs ruminating over the intelligence which his nephew had brought him, and making a mental abstract of it to be communicated to certain of his colleagues; the count smiled to himself as he thought that even his uncle did not per-

ceive the whole of the plot; and Gemma was alone in her room, on her knees before a crucifix, while drowned in tears, she allowed broken words to escape her lips —"I dare not—I dare not tell him—but sooner or later he will know — will find all out — and never pardon me—oh, how will it end!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Quanti cei n'è che mi senton cantare
Diran; buon per colei c'ha il cor contento!
S'io canto, canto per non dir del male;
Faccio per iscialar quel c'ho qua dentro:
Faccio per iscialar mi afflitta doglia;
Sebbene io canto, di piangere ho voglia:
Faccio per iscialar l'afflitta pena,
Sebbene io canto, di dolor son piena.

RISPETTO.

THE bell of the parish church near Palazzo Clementi tolled slowly, summoning the devout to gain indulgences by attending the Viaticum to a dying person; and presently a boy in a white surcoat came forth on the steps and rang a smaller bell, till a little crowd of various ranks had collected, from whom the priest chose the most respectable, rejecting a charcoal-burner, blackened from head to foot; and furnished them with lighted waxen tapers, two of which were raised on poles and guarded by glass lanterns, lest a sudden gust should extinguish all at once; for without light the Host, or *Santissima*, as the Romans say, cannot be carried. The procession began to move slowly from the church, headed by two boys, one still ringing his bell, the other bearing a sort of miniature wooden altar. Those who had volunteered to carry the tapers followed in pairs, guided by one who walked nearly in the centre and assumed the direction of them. Last came the priest,

carrying the Host in a star-like shrine, and the sacristan holding the canopy above it; a crowd followed behind, some of whom accompanied it all the way to its destination, others only a few yards; all hats were taken off, and the people knelt as it passed. Where a carriage was standing still, the driver dismounted from his coach-box and joined the worshippers. All movement and traffic were suspended for an instant, as men were called on to acknowledge the Holy Presence; and, hushing the light words of the idle and the serious ones of the busy, rose up the chanted Psalm, the solemn Prayer. Though the hour was still early, the short winter day had ended, but the obscurity was lighted by the lamps that shone from every window, as the peculiar well-known sound of the little bell gave notice that the Viaticum was passing, and all hastened to pay this customary mark of respect. The procession paused under the archway of Palazzo Clementi, the priest and a few of the attendants bore the Host upstairs, the rest waited below, praying for the departing spirit of one, of whom they knew no more than that the soul was about to stand before its Judge.

That day had the doctor, after his visit to old Nanna, spoken the ominous words, "Make her see her confessor," and he being summoned had heard her last shrift. She had bequeathed such property as she possessed to Irene, and the parish priest was about to administer the Communion to his dying parishioner. The table, covered with a linen cloth, was prepared opposite to the bed to receive the Holy Elements; the old woman awaited him, calm in the belief that all her sins were remitted; Irene was with her, but when the Host was brought, left the room—she was a Protestant, and

could not be admitted at the Communion of the Roman Catholic Church.

About an hour after she sought Vincenzo, looking much cheered, and saying, "The doctor has been here again, and says Nanna is wonderfully better; he thinks she will rally. Oh, what a day it has been! what dismay we were all in this morning! Mrs. Dalzell was the only one not frightened out of her wits; she says English people are much less afraid of illness than we are, but then they have not such sudden, violent attacks. They do not leave a house when some one is dead; even women go to the funeral."

"It seems to be conducted very differently from one here," said Vincenzo. "I remember when our father died, how comforting I thought the service that was read. There is little comfort in the way the dead are treated here."

"No," said Irene, with a shudder; "no respect, no decency—no one who cares present. Oh, one could not bear to see the body of any whom we had loved carried with a dozen others to that pit where they are all heaped together. Don't speak of it."

"You look fagged, dear child," said Vincenzo. "Come here."

"I cannot, I ought to have practised my songs long ago," said Irene, who had to sing at a private party that evening. "I had not the heart to do so before. I think there is something in me still, though," she added, warbling a brilliant variation. "Madame Marriotti is going, and will take me; I had a note from her just now. Shall I disturb you, dear?"

Assured to the contrary, she opened the piano and sang some modern Italian songs—music so seductive

and voluptuous that it seemed to steal into the heart and witch the senses, as though an Armida sang them in her enchanted gardens to a Rinaldo. Looking up as she ended, Irene perceived that her brother was leaning back in his chair, doing nothing but listen.

"Am I preventing your reading?"

"How can I read grave books when you sing that wicked magic music, you naughty siren?"

"All passion, as German music is all spirit. I am not sure that I really like it. I should think better of modern Rome, if they admired Rossini less and Cimarosa more."

"Madame Marriotti's true pupil! I remember the day when you raved about Rossini."

"And, of course, I think his music excessively pretty—exquisite; but I had rather sing a severer kind. But tell me if you like this," said Irene, striking the first chords of a kind of march, to which words equally spirited were set, and looking as she sang like a young priestess. Vincenzo had not heard it before, but instantly recognised the author of the words, and said, "Leone's, to be sure; 'methinks we do know the sweet Roman hand;'" a quotation which, with its compliment to Italian writing, he had been delighted with ever since he and Irene began to study Shakspeare together.

"I certainly am not in good voice to-night," said Irene, anxiously, running over an exercise. "I must steal some of Madama Cecchi's *pasta di cottonia* [quince jam], which she says is so good for singers." As she rose from the piano the maid entered, and asked whether she knew how late it was. "No! I must dress this very moment—do you know how Signora Dal-

zell's headache is? Oh, don't go to see—I will, presently—" but the girl was already knocking at Mrs. Dalzell's door, and receiving no reply, put her head in, exclaiming in a voice like that of a sea-gull,

"*Dorme?* she sleeps?" Luckily Mrs. Dalzell, though lying on her bed, was not asleep but reading, and Carmela perceiving a book still in her hand, was anxious to know what it was. Mrs. Dalzell showed her the title, knowing she was proud of being able to read, and Carmela, for the first time in her life, touched a Bible. Mrs. Dalzell was not quite aware that she put herself into a somewhat perilous position by encouraging an Italian to read an Italian translation which was not from the Vulgate. Carmela might have read *that* if she liked, though few priests would have given her much encouragement to do so.

"*La Bibbia Santa*," she read aloud with great emphasis, but in evident uncertainty as to what it was. She leant on the foot of the bed with the plain purpose of having a little talk, and inquired if the book were not a history of the creation of the world and the generations of the Hebrew kings, and next whether confession were practised in England.

"It is permitted, not obligatory," replied Mrs. Dalzell.

"So much the better," said Carmela, twirling the *spazzola* or feather broom which she had brought in with her; "the priests are rogues."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalzell.

"They are rogues," repeated the girl, with an expressive gesture; "they eat up everything; for their sakes we are taxed; wine is dear, salt is dear, all to make the priests rich. If a man would have his son

make a living nowadays, he must make him a priest. In my country, and here too, you see more priests than laymen. All is for them."

"Take care, Carmela; you will get into trouble if you talk so."

"Pouf! I only say what everyone knows. The Capucini are not so bad; they have wide sleeves, they are more secular, and know that we who live in the world cannot behave like monks; they give us absolution easily, but the Jesuits—eugh! Does the signora know my country?"

"I thought you were Roman, you speak very like one."

"No, no, I come from Umbria—Perugia is my town; it is a beautiful place, with a cathedral, and cardinals, and schools, much cheaper than this; the fields are all flowers and the trees all grapes," replied Carmela, waving her hands in the air. "Does the signora know that I am married?"

"Married!" repeated Mrs. Dalzell, astonished that this ugly little elf should have a husband. "How come you to be in service, then?"

"I had been only married six weeks when my husband was sent to prison, and then I sought a service," said the girl, quite proud of having such a distinguished husband.

"Why was he sent to prison?"

"He owed money, and the creditor wanted it back; my husband told him candidly he would murder him unless he was quiet; and as he still insisted, he stabbed him, so he was sent to Spoleto. I can see him, but it takes much money. Ah!—here I am, running as if the police were after me," cried Carmela, elevating her

voice to its highest pitch, in answer to a distant call, and she rushed out of the room, slamming the door behind her and shouting a most inharmonious song.

Madama Cecchi received her with a scolding for always dawdling, which charge Carmela received first with a declaration that the English signora had detained her, and then that she had not been absent a moment. The war of words was terrific, but soon subsided, and Madama Cecchi, followed by the other maid, Menica, went to see how Irene's dressing was prospering. She was attired, all but her scarf, which the padrona put on for her, bidding her wear it coquettishly, now showing the slender waist, then letting it slip so as to display the bracelet and white arm, while Menica occasionally put in *her* oar, standing at Irene's glass smoothing her own thick hair. Irene listened laughing, and advanced into the sitting-room to show herself to Vincenzo, still pursued by last words from the padrona, who manœuvred a scarf as dexterously as a Spanish lady did her fan; but Nino was heard coming in and demanding his wife, and with an exclamation of "What a worry!" away she went. Vincenzo had arranged Irene's music for her, and she was sitting by him, waiting for a summons to go, when Leone came in, with so completely the look of one who had braced himself against a sudden misfortune that both Vincenzo and Irene exclaimed together, "Dear Leone! what has happened?"

"I have just heard that Farini is really promoted," said Leone, with a voice that trembled with indignation and grief, as he threw himself into a chair; "and another man is put over my head! So much for interest! A base, pitiful wretch who is well known as a

Sanfedist spy! one of Monsignore Clementi's *âmes damnées*, unless he be marvellously belied. Put over the heads of men who have worked hard for years! Is it not a charming specimen of how men prosper with a monsignore for their friend?"

Vincenzo was mute with dismay, and Irene's face, as she came and stood beside Nota, told what a blow this was.

"I heard it an hour ago," continued Leone, "and I have been walking up and down the corridor making up my mind to come in and tell you. Thrown back for years! Not even the consolation, that I have worked for this injustice!"

"Yes, you have, Leone; for you may be sure it is because old scores are remembered against you. Irene, you should remind him of the day when you wished he had everything to lose, that all might see how exactly the same course he would pursue."

"But I want comfort too much myself to give any away," said Irene, and Leone looked up at her, smiled and said, "Come, if Fortune escape us in this way, we must catch her in another, the Sanfedists have not beaten us yet."

"There! he is comforted, now that he has made you as unhappy as himself, Irene!"

"You don't imagine, for an instant, that I wish the past undone—or regret not having tried to propitiate the ruling powers? But hard I must feel it when hope is dashed away in this manner. It is up-hill work at the best, and if I have another chance of rising, the same thing may happen again."

It was too true, and there was a sorrowful pause, till he added, "I am not myself to-night—I had bad

news this afternoon, and was forced to make a sad household sadder. Poor Donati!—I learnt his fate at last. He was condemned to fourteen years' imprisonment, and his courage gave way—he poisoned himself!"

"Oh, Leone! And you had to tell his poor wife and mother!"

"Signorina, signorina, the carriage! and the signora begs you will come directly; she will be like a ferocious beast with anger, unless you do," cried Carmela, bursting in and giving, to say the least, full effect to a message from Madame Marriotti that she was ready. The recollection of her evening's work startled Irene; the contrast was ghastly between it and the double tidings she had just heard.

"Dear Leone, I must go—it is hard to-night," said Irene, for the first time feeling that her profession had chains, as well as rose wreaths. "Good night, Vincenzo. Leone, you will find time to come early to-morrow?—please!"

"Perhaps I may be still here when you come home," said he, wrapping her mantle carefully round her. "Sing well, and don't catch cold."

"Your music!" said Vincenzo, as he saw her going without it. She came hastily back and stooped to kiss him, as she took it. He felt a tear on her cheek. Madama Cecchi came to hurry her away, and she knew that she must not linger a moment longer; but she looked back wistfully as she shut the door, and the mutual glance exchanged between her and Leone was the comfort of both for the rest of the evening. She was to sing at an English party, which seemed a London scene transported to Rome; there were the

lighted rooms, the refreshments, the toilettes, that might have been seen in May Fair; English was spoken on all sides. Irene knew no one, and sat unnoticed, with full time for sad thought, before her turn came to sing. Madame Marriotti, absorbed in her own thoughts as usual, had not noticed her mournful expression, and woke to a consciousness that something had happened to trouble the young cantatrice, only when the unsteadiness of her first notes startled every one with the probability that she would break down. She recovered herself speedily, and ended amid great applause; Madame Marriotti asked, quite indignantly, what she had given her such a fright for?—was Vincenzo ill?—what had happened?

"Only a hope gone for the present; I will tell you as we go home," said Irene, who had to attend the next moment to compliments from a celebrated tenor, who had appeared that season at one of the theatres. Madame Marriotti was much pleased, knowing that the great man would not have taken the trouble to be polite to the young *prima donna*, unless he had thought it worth his while; but muttered as soon as he had moved away, "She sings twice as well as he—I have no patience with the man, an affected fellow! he seems to think it a condescension to sing to us. I must say the child puts her heart into it."

"Nature intended him to act a lover on the stage," said Irene, "he is so pretty!"

"Hark! there is Häse going to play—now we shall have something worth listening to," said Madame Marriotti, and Irene was allowed to return to her thoughts till she was wanted to sing again a playful song, one which Vincenzo was particularly fond of.

She had never sung it better, yet the room she had just left at Palazzo Clementi rose up all the while before her mental eyes, and it seemed to her that there were two Irenes, one performing a part in a brilliant assembly, giving an arch and coquettish song its fullest expression of mirth and malice, and the other sitting by Leone's side, sharing his disappointment, and weaving plans for the future. Applause fell on an unheeding ear; compliments were distasteful, and every moment an hour, as she sat longing to be gone, and thinking how soon happiness had spread her butterfly wings and fluttered away; all the grand and elevated views of a musician's destiny, which she had imbibed from Madame Marriotti, faded lamentably into the background this evening; but, as neither headaches nor heartaches can be openly avowed in society, Irene had to smile, and be courteous, and sing, when asked to do so.

Had she possessed clairvoyance, she would have discovered that there was some one besides Vincenzo and Leone in the sitting-room at the palace, namely Count Clementi, who was immediately made acquainted with what had happened, and manifested vehement indignation.

"So are served our best men! After all that has been said and done, where are our reforms? Are we any better off than we were two years ago? Are the finances better managed, the law courts improved, commerce encouraged, or have the clergy given up a single privilege? We are treated like babies, amused with processions and shows, and Heaven knows what; but tell me of what single substantial improvement can we boast? We cannot move a step, but we feel the chains on hand and foot which remind us we are slaves."

"We have no railroads here, count; and, if we had, reforms don't go by express train; and, though it is true we take ample time about them, the amnesty was enormous gain, and so is the steady progress of the Bianchi opinions," said Vincenzo.

"Yes," cried Leone, blazing up instantly at a subject which no liberal could calmly name; "at least we are no longer mowed down at our enemies' pleasure; our citizens are not struck, robbed, abused, assassinated, misused in every conceivable manner. Some years back every road was closed—ay, and kept with a flaming sword—against a man so much as suspected of being a liberal; it was as if you were flung into the Tiber with a stone round your neck. Why, confiscation and death were things of daily occurrence; an anonymous charge was enough to bring a man to the scaffold."

"And how many hundreds were exiled or imprisoned! And you suppose that the priests will calmly abdicate their power? that your slow-paced reforms will be allowed to go on? Oh, blind men, who will not see that a republic is the only hope of Rome!" said Clementi.

"No. No man can wish for that here; the bare idea would set Rome on fire," said Vincenzo. "The people are not strong enough for it; it would be putting a match to a mine of gun-powder. There is true strength in patience, count."

"You would sow poppies, and expect them to last as long as ilexes," said Leone.

"Everything would be well if the Ministers were honest," said Vincenzo; "if they would really follow out the Pope's schemes; but I don't see what is to

come of the Pope's giving commands, and the people refusing to believe they emanate from him."

"Don't you?" said Clementi, drily.

"Government had better beware!" exclaimed Leone. "If the Neri force us into a reckoning, they need not be surprised if we cast up the accounts our own way. Let them play us false, and the Tiber will run blood from St. Angelo to Ripa Grande. I don't say so on account of what has just happened to me, though far worse may happen any day with no redress—but it is not I, Leone, who am unjustly used, that is a trifle —it is Nota, the liberal, who is to be kept down!"

Clementi struck his forehead as if a thought had suddenly stung him. "Nota! I am the cause of it all! you owe it all to me; doubtless it is my uncle's doing; you are my friend, and as such his enemy. I little thought what our friendship would cost you!"

"Of course I knew whose man it was that has stepped in," answered Leone; "but as for the rest—nonsense, count! true or not, what does that matter? You have lost more by taking our side than any man among us. Come, friend, you are not thinking of this? Do you suppose I cannot make my way in spite of fortune and her allies the Papiste?"

He made a slight, graceful gesture, as if defying them one and all, and held out his hand to Clementi, who looked thoroughly depressed by the conviction that it was through him that Nota had suffered. Vincenzo eagerly sought to convince him to the contrary, and Leone would not listen to a word on the subject; little guessing that, while he warmly assured him of his continual friendship, Clementi was secretly smiling in disdain, and almost scorned to plot against a man

so easily deceived. They were interrupted by Cecchi, who asked in haste whether Irene had returned; Nanna seemed suddenly much worse, and extreme unction was about to be administered. It had been delayed hitherto on account of her apparent rallying in the afternoon.

Irene had not come. The day which had begun in sorrow ended in the same manner; this time the old woman showed no signs of recovery; the priest returned, touched her limbs with the holy oil; spoke the last prayers for the dying over her while she lay, unhearing, unconscious, and before Irene came home, the old nurse was dead.

Nanna had been the orphans' friend from their birth, and they missed her much; they had loved her more than they knew. Their surprise was great when they found she had thought it worth while to make a will: for they had no idea she possessed a *bajocco;* but Irene inherited the contents of an earthenware pot, which Nanna had kept concealed by day and put under her pillow by night; and there was a considerable sum left even when the usual heavy funeral expenses were paid. A heap of coins, varying from half a *bajocco* to a gold piece, was found in it—how acquired no one knew. Clementi could have accounted for some of them, though in truth Nanna was richer than he; others had been given by people who commissioned her in days when she accompanied her young mistress to the theatre, to carry notes and messages; but Nanna knew Irene too well to do anything of the kind; she accepted every embassy, pocketed her reward, and said nothing about either. Clementi had first propitiated her, and to him she remained faithful, giving information to him or to Gemma of everything in Madama Cecchi's household

which it concerned them to know; and, if she ever revealed her treachery, it was under the seal of the confessional, and Irene never knew of it; but probably Nanna did not see anything wrong in what she did, and would not have classed it amongst sins to be confessed.

In the old nurse Clementi lost a useful and unscrupulous ally, but he had made his footing sure with the brother and sister, and could do without her. When Irene had been made acquainted with his fear that he had brought ill-will upon Leone, she showed him an increase of friendliness, to console him for his supposed share in causing a disappointment which so nearly concerned herself. He was now far from being the only noble who had joined the popular side—two or three of the highest rank had long countenanced it; and many more gave it their adhesion on finding that the Court faction was growing less and less prosperous; but still the horizon darkened, and the agitation among the people grew more and more threatening.

The commencement of Pio Nono's reign resembled those brilliant southern days when heaven and earth seem enchanted into halcyon beauty, but which only precede the shock of the earthquake and the flow of the lava. The moderate liberals found their number daily diminished by desertions to the ultra party; wise men trembled, and the populace resisted, like an unbroken horse, when the least curb was put on their clamorous demands. Strong hands and heads were needed to rule them, and these were not numerous in the Pope's Cabinet.

The Ministers temporized, the Austrians threatened, and took the outrageous step of occupying Ferrara. A

proclamation forbidding processions and *dimostrazioni in piazza*, was issued at Rome; and produced violent discontent, for it touched the populace in a point as dear to them as the games of the circus had been to their ancestors. The people hated the Government more heartily for this trifle than for all the past grievances; for, after all, what the masses wanted was strong excitement. They had all something of the tiger nature, ready to break out savagely at any time; revolution would have pleased them better than reform; they were neither liberal nor Papal; and followed any leader who could win their favour.

The anniversary of the amnesty was marked by ominous tumults; there sprang up an extraordinary suspicion that a plot against the personal freedom of the Pope was brewing among the Sanfedists. Instead of a festal procession, howls for vengeance echoed through the streets; unknown hands put up a list of the supposed conspirators on the walls. They were well-known names; the military tore down the paper, a riot ensued, resulting in a popular triumph; when instead of severe measures of repression, the Secretary of State publicly praised the people for their moderation, and a notification was published by authority, that the authors of the supposed plot should be punished. Those suspected had already fled for their lives from the mob, who hunted them like wild beasts, and broke open their houses. Sad omens for the future did that June of 1847 bring; but better hopes might be gathered from the cry of indignation that rang throughout Italy against the Austrian invaders. The occupation of Ferrara had lighted up a flame which had blazed up far too fiercely to be extinguished, even when, tardily and

grudgingly, the Court of Austria listened to the Papal remonstrances, and withdrew from that city. With one accord the Romans offered arms, men, and money to the Pope; and, as if the love of their country had awakened at last in hearts hitherto devoted to self alone, the Gregoriani, the priests, and religious orders were foremost in the work. The very children met and practised military manœuvres; the peaceful, gentle Pio nono found himself turned into a generalissimo just at the time when one of his chief counsellors had left him to go as ambassador to the Court of Sardinia, and death had deprived him of another.

But all these things were in the future, when Nota and his friends held the foregoing conversation in Palazzo Clementi.

CHAPTER XV.

Stranger, within these grounds, whoe'er thou art,
No limitation of thy freedom fear;
Go where thou wilt, and when thou wilt, depart;
Since for thy pleasure all is ordered here.

As all was golden in the age of gold,
Man trusted man, and laws were yet unknown;
Bound by no sterner code our friends we hold,
Than honour's law lays down for every one.

But who, with ill-design prepense, shall dare
The golden rules of courtesy to break,
Our villa's guardian bids that wight beware,
Lest those of friendship's grace he forfeit make.

Latin Inscription in the Villa Borghese.

"WHAT are you going to do with yourself to-day?" asked Count Clementi of his sister, who came into the room where he was turning over a French novel. She carried a bundle of pieces of black silk, which she threw down on the table, and began fitting together.

"I am busy," she replied. "I am going to Irene Mori presently—does that please you?"

"What is all that rubbish?" asked Clementi, taking no notice of the last part of her speech.

"Black silk."

"I see that. Some valuable present from our aunt?"

Gemma shrugged her shoulders. "To make a hood if there be enough—I must have it ready for to-night."

"Going to Casa Olivetti? You were out this morning."

"At mass, of course; it is St. Joseph's day, as you might know."

"By the bye! So I have committed mortal sin by not being up in time to go. And you brought home some good resolutions, I presume, for I think it was only yesterday that you protested you would never go out of the house again, unless you had a new dress."

Gemma did not say what had changed her resolution; she merely asked, "Any message to Vincenzo?"

"It is of no use for you to go now; Irene is gone out."

"You have been up long enough to discover that."

"Ravelli looked in and mentioned it."

Gemma found she got the worst of this cut-and-thrust dialogue, and spoke no more till the contessa came in, and settled herself in the arm-chair which Clementi placed for her in a sunny position. Whatever were his faults, he was a most attentive son; and it was with reason that she complained of the difference between Gemma's conduct and his.

"What are you about, Gemma?" she asked, in the querulous tones which always exasperated her daughter, as if they contained a reproach.

"Making a hood."

"So, after all, you are going with your aunt to-night; I am sure I don't know what you are to wear; that last dress is not paid for, and you had it a year ago."

"There is no large party," said Gemma.

"No, so I suppose; but I can't have you going not fit to be seen; bring me your dress, and let me look at it."

"I have not time now," said Gemma, and she left the room, and applied herself to the ironing of sundry collars and sleeves adorned with her own beautiful embroidery, the only ornamental kind of dress which the young countess could afford. Her mother never went into society, and was too poor to give entertainments; their visitors were only Gemma's two uncles (one of whom had married a wife with a good dowry, and lived in the rooms above the contessa's) and the Olivetti, very old acquaintances, who occasionally passed an evening with the contessa. Gemma's monotonous life was a little varied by going out with her aunt, but the pleasure was sadly diminished by the age of her dresses, especially when she compared them with Imelda's expensive toilettes; and she had seriously declared, only the evening before, that she would go nowhere till she had a new gown, a thing which the family finances could by no means compass, as the richer uncle and aunt were deaf to her hints, and a stormy scene ensued, tears on her part, cool contempt on Clementi's, and lamentations on her mother's.

Early in the morning she might have been seen watering the two great orange-trees which stood in their tubs on either side of the door leading from Con-

tessa Clementi's apartment into the corridor; the hollow trunk of one had often served as a post-office, and once more she found there a note from Ravelli, which told her that he should be at Casa Olivetti that evening. All else became unimportant; Gemma went gaily with her aunt to mass, and afterwards received from her sundry pieces of old silk to do what she liked with. She was happy again, she had a scheme to occupy her mind—better off so far than her brother, who had nothing particular on hand; the day would be too long, though as usual he had risen late.

He sauntered into the Corso with a cigar; met there a new acquaintance, a cousin of the Olivetti, who proposed a drive to celebrate the *festa* which enforced idleness on every one; encountered Ravelli, and invited him to join them, as they stepped into one of the carriages waiting on the stand. All three drove towards the Borghese Gardens, already thronged with pleasure seekers, who found shade in its ilex avenues, and sunshine on the open lawns, where children scrambled about, nurses carried white-robed babies, men smoked their cigars, loitered about, or sat on the stone benches; ladies walked up and down the grassy terraces, carriages stood empty waiting for their owners, or drove along the road to and from the villa—the band playing on the Pincio was distinctly heard, and the delicious day invited irresistibly to idleness—a day when spring and summer seemed married together, and the fruit trees strewed the bridal path with their snowy blossoms.

Meanwhile Gemma, as soon as Irene came in, sought her and found her reading the *Italia* of Leopardi to Vincenzo, who was copying the music of a part she

was soon to rehearse. They did not look as if they wanted any one else, but Gemma sat down and began to talk of anything that came into her head. Irene put away her book, and sat idle near the open window where the warm soft air came breathing in; Vincenzo looked at her with a smile and said, "It is an unusual thing to see you idle, Irene."

"Yes; I am giving myself a treat; I have been practising all the morning. I shall have to be very busy when the theatres re-open after Lent."

"You never work," said Gemma.

"I detest needlework; I like being very busy or very idle; and needlework is neither business nor idleness. Mrs. Dalzell is always doing some, but it is not my nature."

"Maddalena does all your work for you," said Gemma. Maddalena was Irene's servant.

"Yes; but I assure you I don't trust the planning of my costumes to her, she only executes my designs; you don't know how much dress has to do with success on the stage," said Irene.

"What a dragon Maddalena looks!" said Gemma.

"That was one of her recommendations in Madama Cecchi's eyes," said Vincenzo, "when she urged us to have her for Irene's maid; she said to me, *'È brutta, brutta; così non farà l'amore!'*"

"She is one of my chief admirers," said Irene; "when I am practising she stands outside the door to listen, and won't let any one come in to interrupt me!"

"Irene, could you lend me some silk to work with? I have forgotten mine."

"Here, take what you want. Your hood is nearly made!"

"If I had only something to line it with!"

"You want something rose-coloured."

Gemma made a face, which expressed that she had none, and was very unlikely ever to have any. "I may as well let it alone; I cannot wear it without a lining."

"I dare say I have some," said Irene, searching in a drawer. "Here."

Gemma thanked her, and made such good use of the pieces offered to her, that the little hood soon became the prettiest head-dress imaginable.

"Oh, Irene, did you see the Marchesa Viola's wreath the last time we were at the Valle? Anything so ridiculous! and she was dressed in full gala costume. Every one was talking about it; and there was the Cavaliere Monteverdi with her again!"

"People talk of nothing but what such and such a one has worn," said Irene; "I sometimes wonder if all society be as satirical and gossiping and false as ours!"

"What would you have us talk of?"

"Why—I don't know—but surely in some places there must be a little talk about books, or art, or science, not merely whom one has seen, or what has happened lately, or what our friends wear, and whether their clothes came from Paris or not!"

"I never heard of any place where people talked of books instead of persons—it would be very dull. Now I have finished, all but the strings. Have you anything that would make strings, you dear, good Irene?"

"I don't know—come and look."

Gemma sighed as she turned over the pieces of

silk, the ribbons, the fragments, which careless Irene had heaped together and forgotten—there was so much that Gemma would gladly have appropriated. Strings at least she could secure, and when they were attached, the hood was ready for wear. While she was putting it on to display it, Mrs. Dalzell came in and proposed to Vincenzo a drive in the Borghese Gardens. He gladly accepted, declaring he could "crutch" himself downstairs unaided; Gemma looked so imploring that the invitation was extended to her, and she ran to fetch her bonnet, troubling herself no further about her mother's consent than to look in and say, "Mamma, I am going *in carrozza* with the English lady."

Vincenzo laughingly observed to his sister, "She got half her hood out of you—I know she came on purpose!"

"They must be wretchedly poor," said Irene, "or else it would be too mean—not that I grudge her the silk, if she would only ask outright."

"And not imagine that she humbugs you with her sweet names! She has done the same thing fifty times before; they are too proud to let Clementi work, or Gemma marry a commoner, but not too proud to get all they can out of other people. They will not work, and are *not* ashamed to beg. I am not speaking of the count."

At this moment Gemma came back, and they went downstairs, accommodating their pace to Vincenzo's capabilities. The carriage stood waiting, with its handsome pair of horses and liveried servant; Gemma did not fail to notice the completeness of the equipage, and as she sat opposite to Mrs. Dalzell, her black eyes surveyed the Englishwoman's features and dress with

an unflinching, curious scrutiny, as different as possible from the sincere, gladsome look of Irene. They drove out through the Piazza del Popolo, where the sun poured down dazzlingly on the white dusty ground, and illumined the buildings, till architecture that would have been mean, and streets that would have been gloomy elsewhere, became perfectly beautiful under the wand of that great enchanter the sun, who, like Happiness, calls out all that is lovely and beautifies even that which is not already fair. The obelisk rose up into as blue a sky as ever canopied it in its own Heliopolis; the lions spouted out clear streams of water at each corner of its stone steps, with a refreshing sound; on the shadier side beggars lay basking and sleeping —extended, too, at full length on the steps of the church, which the Roman people raised to purify the site of the unholy sepulchre of Nero; boys hopped in all directions in the game of *campana*, or hop-scotch, without paying the slightest regard to the carriages which drove incessantly through the piazza, and threatened to annihilate them; bird-voices, rare sounds in Rome, twittered in the belt of cypresses; every one and everything seemed in a state of enjoyment.

Everybody eats fritters on St. Joseph's day, and at the corners of the streets booths were erected, sheltered by arbours of green boughs, and sometimes adorned with broadsides of verses in large print that all the world might see; fritter-eaters crowded around them, so fiercely eager that the white-robed cooks were breathless with frying, and handing their wares to the consumers. Being a *festa*, which happened not only to fall in Mid-Lent, but on a Friday, the Romans were doubly delighted to celebrate it, and not a carriage was

to be seen on any of the stands—all were engaged by pleasure-seekers.

There had been no rain for weeks, and Mrs. Dalzell and her party found the dust so disagreeable that they were very glad to leave the carriage, and sit down among the ilexes. Irene applied herself to seeking wild flowers, Vincenzo lay on the turf, and Gemma began catechizing the English lady. Her restless spirit pined for change, as a traveller in the desert pines for water; out of Rome she saw novelty, liberty; English women appeared to her the most enviable creatures in the world; she never guessed that they seldom used their liberty in the way that she contemplated.

"The signora lives in London?" she began.

"No, in the country."

"In summer—*in villeggiatura?*"

"All the year round when I am in England."

"In a town in the country, then," persisted Gemma, unable to understand that country society so peculiarly English, and consisting in great part of the families of a married priesthood.

"But you go to London for the carnival?"

"We have none in England."

"No carnival!" said Gemma, incredulously; "nor theatres?"

Her evidently declining estimation of England was raised again, when she heard there were theatres.

"And English ladies walk about alone, and marry whom they please, do they not? I have heard Signora Olivetti say that their parents trust girls in England, as if they were *figli maschi*" (male sons).

"They walk alone in the country, but no young girl goes out by herself in London, and a marriage against

a parent's wish is rare. We trust girls because they are brought up not to abuse confidence."

"Here no one trusts them, and in the convent they never can think for themselves; and when they come out, and have not the nuns always after them, they get into mischief," said Gemma; a remark that hit the truth so nearly, that Mrs. Dalzell perceived that the girl had now, at all events, begun to think for herself, and besides had a keen wit. "They have nothing that they care to do—some are satisfied to make their dresses and knit stockings by their mother's side, and some are so weary of their life that they would die outright, if they did not find something else to think of—pain or pleasure—either is a change; it makes one's heart beat a little faster. There is at least one minute in the day to look for, to scheme for—that one feels mad to be deprived of—one lives thus!" Her face expressed such stormy passions as could be only known to a hot-blooded native of the south, as she described her own feelings under this thin disguise, little guessing that the English lady had the clue to each word. In the old times this girl would have been the heroine of some such terrible tragedy as the annals of almost every Italian family can furnish; the fiery, lawless nature still existed, the times only were altered; it was a wild beast, growing sullen and savage in a cage.

"See, signora," said Irene, returning with a handful of delicate white starlike flowers which she had found under the ilexes. "What are these?"

They were unknown both to Mrs. Dalzell and Vincenzo, who had begun to study botany a little, though much hindered by the lack of Italian works on

the subject; and they examined them with an interest incomprehensible to Gemma, who rose and wandered away, enjoying the unwonted freedom. Mrs. Dalzell was so busy discussing the natural system with Vincenzo, that she did not notice the girl's absence, but Irene exclaiming, "Where can she have gone? there will be a scandal if she be seen alone," hastened to seek her.

But another eye saw her long before Irene could find her; Ravelli, as he sauntered with his two companions, caught sight of a well-known dress—the face was turned in another direction, yet it could be no other than Gemma, unlikely as it seemed that she should be wandering here alone. With some excuse to his friends he withdrew his arm from Clementi's, and crossed into the avenue slowly, so as to meet her when they had passed out of sight. The count, with his lynx eyes, saw her quite as soon as Ravelli, and a frown knit his finely marked black brows together; but he saw without choosing to see, and continued his talk with Signor Lelio Olivetti, a cousin of Imelda's, just come to Rome for the express purpose of seeing a wife whom Signora Olivetti wrote to tell him she had found for him. A meeting with Ravelli, Gemma had not dared to hope for; but when she found he had been with her brother, her consternation was so evident, that it again aroused the wonder of her lover. Her firm conviction that Clementi would sooner or later play her false made her ready at any moment to betray him; but the impossibility of explaining away her own long course of deceit again prevailed, and she let herself feel nothing but the joy of these few free moments, troubled very speedily, as it seemed, by the appearance of

Irene, who came straight up to Gemma with no more notice of Ravelli than if she had never seen him before, and said briefly, "We are going home."

"Already!"

"Already? we have been here an hour at least. Come."

"Not so much as a look for me, Irene?" said Ravelli, with mischievous pleasure in her evident indignation.

"I shall see you to-night at Casa Olivetti," answered Irene, with meaning, and Gemma looked at her as if she could have killed her.

"*Au revoir*, hard-hearted one, then, unless you will let me come too," said Ravelli.

Irene turned and looked at him with eyes full of indignant reproach.

"Luigi!" she exclaimed, "once for all, I must say it—how can you act so basely? Do you know that I am sometimes ready to renounce you as a friend! If you love Gemma, tell the world so, and take the consequences; but do not risk her fair name and Imelda's happiness any longer."

"As the consequences would be the cloister for Gemma, I can hardly take your advice, Irene."

"Then wait, without such meetings as this."

"Why? do you suppose I knew she would be here?"

"It is only one of many; is not that true, Luigi?"

"Come," said Gemma, whose impatience now brimmed over, "it is you who linger now—come!" She caught Irene's hand to hasten her on; but Ravelli was stung by her look and words, and said, haughtily, "One minute, Irene. Gemma is dependent on her

uncle; perhaps you will ask his consent for us! You need not suppose it is on my own account that I keep our love secret; you ought to know what persecution would come on her if he heard of it, but the day will come when we shall be independent of Monsignore Clementi. If you suppose that we prefer such meetings as these to being openly affianced, you are much mistaken."

"Perhaps Gemma likes them better than you do, Luigi," said Irene; and the words struck home, for Gemma did, by nature, love anything that required plotting or scheming.

"Come!" Gemma exclaimed, flushing scarlet, and hurrying on. Irene had no more to say, and followed her. As they got out of sight of Ravelli, who stood still in an attitude of despondency most unusual to him, Gemma whispered, in a tone of such intense hatred that Irene started, "I thank you—I shall not forget this, Mademoiselle Mori!"

Ravelli's feelings were not soothing. No man could like a woman to despise him, and he had a deep esteem and admiration for Leone's betrothed bride. He loved Gemma passionately, yet he doubted her, he could not esteem her; but still, to have a glimpse of her, to exchange a look—a word—was the absorbing thought of each day. He could not have told why. He knew perfectly that Irene was a thousand times superior; that Imelda would make him a better wife, but he loved Gemma. There was no why or wherefore—it was the fact. He did not greatly fear Count Clementi's aristocratic prejudices, but he knew the uncle would end the matter at once should it come to his ears; and as for his own father, Signor Ravelli,

Luigi had been already driven nearly mad with irritation at his obstinate determination, that the long-arranged marriage between his son and Imelda Olivetti should take place. Nothing but his mother's terrified, tearful face, her misery after similar scenes, prevented Luigi from making some outrageous reply; but he knew himself, after all, to be as much the idol of his old father as of his mother, and, in every calmer moment, reproached himself for refusing to make them happy. Some time before, he would have married the pretty child they had chosen for him, and been contented; he had always made a pet of her, and liked her in a brotherly way, which might easily have glided into a husband's affection; but at Casa Olivetti he met Gemma, he saw her frequently with Irene, and feelings awoke which were very dissimilar to his calm liking for Imelda. Now, if he would, he could not marry, for Gemma responded to his love with the unbounded ardour of her violent nature; he had linked his fate to hers, and could not disentangle them. His lips were compressed, his brow darkened, as he stood meditating; but, speedily, his usual gay, mocking smile returned, he was Luigi Ravelli again; a fire-fly, defying fate and enjoying the battle; something of a weather-cock by nature, but withal thoroughly affectionate, generous, and manly; and the best of the club who met to play at *pallone* in Palazzo Barbarini on summer evenings, a distinction which proved that he had not his match in Rome for speed of foot, lightness of step, and quickness of eye.

He perceived his friends on the main road, and joining them, all sauntered on, till, in a little thicket, where the ground was coloured by purple anemones

and blue periwinkles in rich mosaic, they beheld a Decameron-like group—Mrs. Dalzell and her companions seated or lying on the turf, luxuriating in the enchanting day, when every breath inhaled air suffused with sunshine. They had not yet quite made up their minds to go, and the arrival of the young men gave an excuse for lingering another half-hour.

Count Clementi introduced his new acquaintance, and some exchange of compliments and trifling talk ensued. Irene alone sat silent, enjoying the soft, enervating day, but thinking, at the same time, of Imelda. Clementi sat near her, and made an occasional remark, chiming in with her mood, but keeping, unobserved, an eye on his sister and Ravelli, who had just answered Vincenzo's question, why he had not visited them the evening before, that he and Leone had been discussing a scheme, with some others, for a *circolo* or club.

Gemma's face clouded. When she had contrived that night to slip in on purpose to meet him, he had stayed away to flirt with her sworn rival, politics! She entered at once into conversation with Lelio Olivetti, who began with, "I have heard of you repeatedly, contessa, though this is the first time I have seen Rome."

"And what do you think of our Rome, signor?"

"How shall I tell you what I think of it! I stand on the bridges, and admire the views like a foreigner!"

From sentiment they got to satire; Gemma was in a wicked mood, and spared none of her acquaintance. Mrs. Dalzell, singularly as she had been thrown into foreign society, did not know enough of it to understand the allusions which called forth repeated peals of

laughter from the two chief talkers; but she saw by the curl on Vincenzo's lip what he thought of the conversation, and began to wonder if she were doing right to allow the young lady to make this new acquaintance. Uncertain of Roman customs, she would have been uneasy, had not the presence of Count Clementi reassured her. He was saying to Irene, "How you must be looking forward to *villeggiatura*."

"Yes; but I shall have some hard work first. Did I tell you that we are to have a new opera, with an old Roman story for the plot—*Il Caio* is the name, and I believe I am to be the heroine, Valeria. I don't know its merits yet. When we do leave Rome, I hope we shall go to some new place; Frascati and Albano have become places where people only go to show their fine clothes."

"They save all the year round to make a show in *villeggiatura*, just as the poor put away a *bajocco* or two a week for the October feasts, and then hey! for drives, and new dresses, and peacock's feathers in the hats, and a feast at some little inn outside the walls!"

"Well, are they not wise? Mankind must have something to look forward to—a laurel crown or an October feast, it does not matter which!"

"They both occasion headaches very often," said Vincenzo; "but the laurels last longer."

"Than the headaches or the feast? This is a day when roses seem more appropriate than laurels—*la parure à l'hiver, mais le deuil de l'été*, you know!"

"If I had the making of the wreath, it should be both, mixed—the summer should have its laurels, and the winter its roses," replied Clementi, in a tone

of such real interest, that the words were not complimentary but sympathetic, and Irene smiled gratefully. He had a bit of bay in his hand, and springing lightly up, he gathered a handful of sprays from several trees near, and twisted them into a garland. "See, Vincenzo, my friend," said he, playfully, "my wreath will be more enduring than your wild flowers. Offer your bouquet to Flora — mine is for the Priestess of Apollo."

"Cypress!" said Vincenzo; "are you crowning her with cypress?"

"No, no; lignum vitæ."

"Nay, it is cypress," said Irene; "never mind, I am not afraid."

"Don't put it on," said Clementi, hastily. "A cypress crown! the first thing I ever gave you!"

"Only a very little bit, and a great deal of bay to counteract it. Let me have it."

"No," said Clementi, untwisting the wreath, and throwing away the sprays. A little gust of warm wind bore them back to Irene, who exclaimed, as she took up the ill-omened bough, "after all, it has come back to me! See, Count!" She looked the personification of glad fearlessness as she spoke, holding the cypress bough above her head, her mirthful mood entirely restored by the evident seriousness with which Clementi regarded the omen. He broke to pieces a branch which had fallen near him, thinking how true the omen might be—one created only by his own conscience, and thus, indeed, prophetic.

"Are there laurels in the world to suffice both you and Leone, Irene?" asked Ravelli, breaking off a conversation with Mrs. Dalzell, during which his eye con-

stantly sought Gemma, who was entirely engrossed with her new acquaintance.

"Our laurels grow on different trees, Luigi, and his are higher and more evergreen than mine."

"Why is he not here? we only want him to complete our party," said Count Clementi.

"It was a sudden plan of Mrs. Dalzell's; Gemma was with us, and we all came together," said Vincenzo. "The sun was so dazzling in the piazzas that the only thing to look at comfortably was one's own shadow. I fully comprehend the force of the Arabian wish, 'May your shadow never be less.'"

"We shall have to fly into the country as soon as we can," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"You think of remaining amongst us all the year, signora? Irene will succeed in persuading you to live altogether in Italy at last," said Clementi.

"No; I have too many friends in England; but I confess that Italy attracts me every autumn, as if I were a migratory bird."

"The swallows have not such good taste," said Vincenzo; "in autumn you may see them clustering about Sta. Maria del Popolo by hundreds, and then, off they go."

"*San Benedetto, rondina sotto'l tetto;* I see they are come," said Irene.

"Sing *Pellegrina Rondinella*, Irene," said Clementi, humming the first lines of Grossi's lovely verses, in a voice so sweet and rich, that Mrs. Dalzell at once perceived why Madame Marriotti preferred him to Leone. Irene complied, and he sang a second by ear, and the passers-by stopped with one accord, taking off their hats as it concluded, with a murmur of "*Bravi! Bravi!*"

"They have found you out, Irene," said Ravelli. "By the bye, did Leone turn poet on purpose to write songs for you? I have always intended to ask him."

"You know very well that his poems were famous long before he ever saw us," she answered, provoked just as he meant her to be.

"I shall break with him soon, I foresee," said Ravelli, between jest and earnest; "he has more power than any man in Rome over the people, and the villain uses it to promote his confounded half measures, moderation, peace, and such stuff. There is nothing so peaceful as death; we have lain in the tomb for ages—ay, like the poor wretches whom Dante saw in their open sepulchres with a shower of burning snow falling on them; if life return to us, it must be in struggles and suffering. What are we good for, but to fight for our country—live or die for her, as she needs us? Moderation, while the Austrian stands on our soil? *Viva l'Italia!*

"*E fuori i Barbari!* But no more politics to-day, Luigi," said Clementi, perceiving that Signor Lelio was suddenly regarding them with a stare of offended amazement: "can't you talk of something else on a summer's day?"

"Oh, to be sure," said Ravelli, flinging himself back on the turf; "by all means; let us talk of violets, and lambs, and brooks, if you like; no doubt there is much that is profitable to say about them."

"Or suppose we go home," said Mrs. Dalzell. "Are you ready, signorina?"

"Quite," answered Gemma, rising; and they all walked together towards the carriage.

"I shall see you to-night at my cousin's, contessina?" asked Olivetti, who kept by her side.

"Yes; unless my aunt changes her mind as to going. *A rivederla*, signor."

She sprang into the carriage, and held out a hand to Vincenzo, but Irene looked on waiting upon him as her special right, and speedily arranged his cushions and helped him in; Mrs. Dalzell followed, the carriage drove away, the young men walked on towards their own, which was at some distance, Olivetti exclaiming, "Count, often as I have heard of your sister's beauty from my cousin, I was still unprepared for it—what is her name?"

"Gemma," replied Clementi, carelessly, while Ravelli looked daggers at this new rival, who continued to express his admiration, and asked if she were yet betrothed. Ravelli looked sharply at the count, whose simple negative was not all he had hoped for. A beggar boy had been following and persecuting them for some minutes, his dolorous whine much interfering with the eloquence of Signor Olivetti, who repulsed him in vain, then suddenly lost patience, and struck him. The boy staggered, but recovered himself with an imprecation, "May you die of a *Pratiolo*," he cried, as he stood glaring after the young man, who had walked on laughing. The lad took no notice of a silver coin which one of those who had seen the brutal act tossed to him, but in a minute or two sprang into a side avenue, and followed Olivetti and his companions. Clementi remarked coolly, "Rash, my friend; we have stilettoes here."

"If all the *canaglia* of Rome wore stilettoes, it is the same to me," answered Olivetti, disdainfully.

"Before the signor has been here many days, he will learn that the *canaglia* are not to be trampled on," said Ravelli, flushed to the temples, and half choked with indignation; "I shall see you again to-night, count," and he walked rapidly away without greeting of any sort to Olivetti, who said,

"A friend of yours, count? he seems to love the rabble strangely."

"Dear signor, is that wonderful in days when King Mob rules?" asked Clementi, with his quiet smile. "When the new monarch's affairs become out of order, we shall see how many adherents he retains."

"I conclude he is a plebeian, this Signor Ravelli; but is it possible that you, a noble, have adopted these republican opinions?" asked Olivetti, whose wealth would have enriched a dozen such counts as Clementi, but who laboured under a desire to buy the title which birth had denied to him, and was a more rigid aristocrat than the far-descended Roman nobles themselves.

"It is so. You have heard little of Roman politics, signor, if you know nothing of Ravelli!"

"I have heard of him as a turbulent, seditious man, and I regret profoundly that my family are to be connected with him. He is not noble; but you, count, I cannot conceive that you really take the side of the mob—you, the head of so old a family?"

And Clementi found it harder to convince the *parvenu* of his sincerity, than to deceive all the liberals put together. He inwardly muttered a malediction on his obstinacy, and reflected what unpleasant doubts such talk might awaken among the Bianchi if it should ever come to their ears. Resolved to stop him, he said at last, "I am so little of an aristocrat, that I

would give my sister to a commoner did it depend on me."

"On whom, then, does it depend? Are not you the head of the family?"

"My uncle, Monsignore Clementi, is her guardian, and his prejudices are invincible."

Signor Olivetti's admiration of aristocratic sentiments received a rude shock, but he had acquired the certainty that Clementi would not oppose his wishes. The new friends vied with one another in their expressions of affection as they parted, though each party well knew this warmth to be only assumed out of politeness.

In the evening they met again at Signor Olivetti's house, where Irene, the Ravelli family, Gemma and her uncle and aunt, formed the rest of the *società*. The ladies all wore dark morning dresses; there was no attempt to beautify the room. For some time the gentlemen talked together, and the ladies did the same, exchanging confidences and condolences on the delinquencies of their servants, or discussing the last sermon at the *Gesù*, and inquiring what had been given out as the subject of the next. Imelda was happy in having Irene with her, but unconsciously shrank a little from Gemma, who, still burning with anger against both Irene and Ravelli, revenged herself on the latter by speedily engaging Lelio Olivetti in a lively conversation. Her aunt scarcely attended to her proceedings, and her uncle thought them his wife's affair. Clementi presently left the elder gentlemen, and discussed the new opera with Irene; and Ravelli, stung by Gemma's conduct, seated himself by his betrothed, to the visible satisfaction of his father and mother, the

latter of whom turned a thankful look to him, believing these attentions to be paid entirely for her sake. He smiled as he met his mother's eye, and Imelda's heart beat with frightened joy that made her hardly able to answer his questions—questions put after all with the patronizing yet affectionate manner of a young man towards a pet child. Imelda never did herself justice with Luigi; she would have got on much better had she been more indifferent to him; she was too anxious to be worthy of his notice, too much afraid of his thinking her silly, to be at ease with him; there was always a kind of strain on her mind when she talked to him. It might have been otherwise had she ever been alone with him, or had she been educated so as to be at home in the subjects which interested him. But whether he liked it or not, he could hardly help knowing what he was to her, and this knowledge usually made him keep aloof without asking himself why. There was sometimes, however, a sort of pleasure in knowing that it was his presence which brightened that young face, and the conversation begun by him in pure irritation lasted till all the party were called to play at *Tombola*, a kind of "lottery tickets," as an old-fashioned game of cards was once called in England. Pauls were now rapidly won and lost, and the noise and excitement waxed so great, that the elder Signor Olivetti exclaimed, "Hush—hush, scandalous people! it is Lent!"

"No, not to-day, not to-day," cried several voices in reply, "it is *Pianeta rossa* to-day!" implying by this that the priests had said mass in the red robe which marks a festival, and that therefore Lent was suspended.

"Let the children enjoy themselves," said his wife; "we shall not have another game for ages; I am going into retreat after Easter."

"Where is it to be? Oh, I know you always go to the same place every year; I shall be at the *Sacro Cuore* this year," said Signora Ravelli; and remarks on this exclusion from the world, the preparation for Easter and Whitsuntide, mingled with the shrieks of delight as fortune favoured or frowned on the players.

Ravelli still sat by Imelda, but his eyes turned frequently to Gemma, whose face, to eyes that could read her expression, betrayed jealous uneasiness, though she still seemed engrossed by her game and by Signor Lelio.

Signora Olivetti had her reasons for wishing that Gemma were married; she had long prepared her cousin Lelio to admire the young contessina, and had now induced her husband to arrange this party expressly for the sake of bringing about a meeting. The interview in the Borghese Gardens had been better luck than she could have hoped; Lelio was as anxious as could be wished to secure so handsome a wife; especially as, though dowerless, she was noble. All on his side was so satisfactory, that the next day Signora Olivetti paid a diplomatic visit to Contessa Clementi, who rose to meet her with tender embraces, which were returned with equal warmth, while mutual amicable reproaches were exchanged for the length of time that had elapsed since they met.

"Sit down, *cara*," said the contessa, throwing an indescribable amount of caressing politeness into the simple words, and using the familiar *tu*. Though they were acquaintances of thirty years' standing, Signora

Olivetti replied with "*voi*," less formal than "*ella*," but more respectful than the second person singular. The contessa called the visitor by her Christian name, but the title was used in return; for the poverty-stricken Clementi were noble, and the rich commoner was far beneath them.

"Excuse my not having visited you, dear Gigia," said the contessa, sinking into her chair again, and observing every minute particular of her visitor's dress as she spoke. "I go nowhere—I cannot even get to mass now; I was obliged to get a dispensation from fasting this Lent; my doctor said it would have killed me. But you—you never come near me? I am so happy to see you, it is life to me."

"It is the greatest pleasure in the world to me, dearest contessa; I must thank you too for letting Gemma come to me last night. Did she tell you what a conquest she made of my cousin? Ah, naughty girl! your mamma knows nothing about it!"

"No, she never tells me anything. Why have you not brought Imelda? When is she to be married? I heard it was to be at Easter."

"I cannot spare her yet; I must keep her a little longer if Luigi will let me: but you know we mothers must not be unreasonable, and he grows impatient. This autumn I suppose I must let her go. And when is Gemma to marry?"

"Ah, my dear Gigia, you know she might have been married long ago—that excellent marchese—"

"Well, she will be wiser next time; will you not, Gemma? Suppose I knew of a good match—an admirable young man—the best of characters—rich—rich as Plutus!"

"Noble?" inquired the contessa.

"No, but of a good family; you cannot have everything, *contessa mia!* He would live in Rome if you positively desired it; but his house—his estate—a paradise, I assure you. No one need wish to live elsewhere. She would have an establishment like a princess."

"I am afraid my brother-in-law would not consent," said the contessa, doubtfully.

"Monsignore Clementi will hear reason. A young man who does not so much as ask if she has a dowry!"

"Ah! that is much!" sighed Contessa Clementi. "What is his name—this cousin of Signor Olivetti?"

"Yes—I know his whole history; no debts, no affairs of the heart, an immense property in the Marches—only one fault, he is an enraged *Papista!* Do not fail to tell monsignore this, contessa. I do not mind telling you his name. I should wish everything to be open and candid—Lelio Benedetto Mariano Olivetti. What did you think of him, my dear little Gemma?"

"I can't tell yet; I have only seen him twice."

"But one knows immediately in these matters, *carina;* it is the impression on the heart by which we must judge; character will come by-and-bye."

"I think he is too much of a courtier."

"There it is!—how often I have said, '*Lelio mio*, speak sincerely; put sincerity into your manner; these polite ways may please a foreigner, but no Roman girl will ever marry you!' But I do assure you he is an angel—an angel, my dear child."

"He wants an immediate answer, I suppose," said the contessa, looking apprehensively at her daughter; "I don't know—I must consult monsignore and my son—I can't say—"

"He will wait, he will wait a reasonable time, contessa; I know you have some difficulty with monsignore at present, but I have great hopes. I trust that Lelio's politics will not make your son his enemy? Meanwhile this darling will consider the matter; is it not so, Gemma?"

"I must have a week at least then," said Gemma; "I do not believe I can love him, and I shall make a prayer to be assisted to decide. I cannot consent unless I feel that it is Heaven's will, dear signora."

"There is a sweet child! See how good and pious she is, contessa! I know how she will decide, and I hope monsignore will be favourable to Lelio too. Now I must return; he is dying to know the result of my visit. Good-bye, good-bye, dearest contessa—good-bye, my Gemma."

New embraces followed before Signora Olivetti, in her splendid dress, swept out of the room.

"What ostentation! what vulgarity to wear such velvet as that! Merely to show she is rich! That is the only way these commoners can try to equal us," said Contessa Clementi. "She is intolerable; but if this cousin is really such a good match, we must think about him, Gemma."

CHAPTER XVI.

Non piace a lei che innumerabil turba,
Viva in alto di fuor, morta di dentro,
Le applauda a casa, e mano a man percuota;
Ne si rallegra de le rozze voci,
Volgano a lei quelle infiniti lodi—
—Ma la possanza del divino ingegno
Vita di dentro.

"THERE is only one thing that I wish, Vincenzo" —said Mrs. Dalzell, concluding a long conversation

concerning the prospects of Nota and Irene, "that he were a Protestant; the more I see of Romanism, the more I shrink from it. I half hoped that studying and talking with you might win him over."

"You forget how greatly my superior he is, dear Mrs. Dalzell, and besides we never touch on that subject. You don't know how dangerous for us both it would be, though, for that matter, we have discussed things more perilous before now."

"Dangerous?"

"Yes; there are severe laws against spreading Protestant opinions. If you belong to a nation that can take care of you, such as England or France, you will only be expelled by the police; but if you are an Italian, or say a Swiss, or a Swede, then you will, as sure as fate, see the inside of the Inquisition."

"The Inquisition, in these days! is not that a figment of the anti-papist faction?"

"On my honour, it is not. I don't say that torture is used now; but I know, for a fact, that now, at this moment, the prisons near the Vatican are used for all heretics or priests whom the Holy Tribunal sees fit to imprison; and all Romanists are *bound* to denounce a Protestant who attempts to convert them. But the real reason why I never argue on religion with Leone is, that I know it would be useless; he has the entire, childlike belief that one often finds here, where there is faith at all."

"It is strange, Vincenzo!"

"It is; I see more how strange since I have studied the subject, as I really have tried to do. You see that, in some incomprehensible way, the most learned men believe they can reconcile the Church of Rome's pre-

sent claims with antiquity. Padre Rinaldi does so, for instance. I know, however, that there is not quite as much unity among them as they wish us to believe, they differ as to the amount of worship to be paid to images, and modern perverts go infinitely further than those bred and born in the Roman Communion. I don't pretend to comprehend how, in an infallible Church, there can be differences of opinion, or how men can limit their belief; but I know that Leone and a few others hold that, if Protestants are fully persuaded they are in the right, then they are in the Catholic Church; but most would say there is no hope of salvation for a heretic."

"Like the old beggar whom I heard saying yesterday, as poor Mr. Domville's funeral passed by, 'Why make such a fuss for a heretic, who must belong to the evil one!' You don't think Leone would wish to convert Irene?"

"Oh no, and, unlike most Romanists, he knows a good deal about the Church of England; but still it is sad when husband and wife cannot worship together. I wish from my heart that he belonged to us."

"You are not one of those who think the spirit everything, and the form nothing, Vincenzo."

"No man could live here and think so," he replied with emphasis; "I believe our form of prayer has saved England from the unbelief of the Germans."

"It is a blessing that many would readily take from us. I notice that, with all Leone's bitter feeling towards the priests (Madama Cecchi the same), they both reverence the priest's office."

"He looks on the office as entirely holy and distinct; a bad priest cannot destroy the holiness of his

profession, any more than a bad Levite could. You see, the reason Madama Cecchi and others abhor the priests in general is, that they look on them as spies. If the police want information, they go to the priests, who are bound to be able to give it, using the confessional as their engine, and some wretched old women as spies on the parish. Perhaps you don't know why poor old Nanna was so unpopular; she always confessed to the parish priest, and doubtless reported to him all that went on in the palace. I dreaded her more than I can tell you, when we were deep in conspiracy, and hundreds of lives depended on our prudence."

"Nanna would surely never have betrayed or injured you?"

"I cannot tell, if superstition had come into play; and certainly in a deathbed confession she would. You little know the net of espionage thrown over Rome!"

"Will you tell me what you hoped for from all the risk you ran?"

"To counteract the Sanfedists and the Austrian influence, and have a strong party ready to carry out reforms when the right time came. There was compensation for all our harass and peril, in knowing what a gallant set of men there were, ready to risk everything for Italy, even when all patriotism appeared to be crushed out. But now, half their heads seem turned; and, while they exalt Nota to the skies, they act on Cecchi's doctrine—not that he is much of a leader, he is too silent and undemonstrative to make much show; but he and those like him are dangerous men, and I don't know that Ravelli is much better, though he only preaches wild doctrines, because he is a mad,

headstrong fellow, who enjoys uproar and danger; not that he has any personal grudge against Government; and, somehow, the more provoking and unreasonable he is, the better I like him! It would take half the day to count up his freaks. I always believed that he knew, from the best authority, who chalked up, on the door of the Austrian Embassy's Palace, '*Fuori i barbari!*'"

"Leone once said he was like the wind, equally unstable and equally violent," said Mrs. Dalzell.

"There is a spirit and fun in him, that somehow one can't help being taken with," said Vincenzo, smiling at many old recollections; "and yet he has often thoroughly exasperated me."

"To return to Leone," said Mrs. Dalzell, "whom I like more the more I see of him. I wish he and Irene could marry; I am rather an advocate for early marriages."

"We are very happy as we are," said Vincenzo. "I don't think a little waiting matters."

"Would they say the same?"

"Well, I am not quite so sure, and after all I wish nearly as much to have Leone for a brother as he can to have Irene for a wife. No one can guess what he has been to me."

"Vincenzo," said Mrs. Dalzell, "let me ask this once—are you happy now?"

His pale face flushed. "Yes, signora, I am happy," he answered, in a deep, low tone, and with a look that seemed to gaze far away. "Yes, I have learnt at last that sickness may be a vocation, as well as labour—and I have had so much to make it easy to me."

He had once wrung her heart by the anguish that

his despair had re-awakened there; but she received double recompense, as she felt that her words at that time had been a prophecy. Vincenzo had conquered in a battle where stronger men might have sunk down and perished, and the reward was a peace which none should ever take away. Mrs. Dalzell bent down and kissed him, as if he had been the lost son for whose sake she had first loved him. That love of hers was one of the things to which Vincenzo alluded when he spoke of some things that had lightened his trials, but truly the orphans had well repaid her for her kindness. She knew that many of her friends, especially at Rome, had commented on her conduct towards them, had even blamed her; but she was accountable to no one; she said all that was necessary to such as had any right to question her, and let the rest of the world make a nine-days' wonder of the matter if it liked. One or two knew that the orphan brother and sister had come into her hands, when something to love was a true Godsend to her. The old saying, so fittingly expressed by Schiller, applied in this case as in many others.

"A millstone and the human heart go ever round and round;
If they have nothing else to grind, themselves they must be ground."

Her friends had grown accustomed to the affair and speculated no longer about it; indeed she began to derive credit from having patronized so promising a cantatrice as Mademoiselle Mori: but some of her acquaintance could still torment her a little when an opportunity occurred, as she found when, after her conversation with Vincenzo was over, she walked to one of the libraries in the Piazza di Spagna, to see by the arrival book whether a friend had yet reached Rome. As usual, the shop was nearly full of idlers,

some looking at a portfolio of photographs, others examining the books, or speaking to the courteous librarian, others looking at the list of ceremonies to see what was going on that week. Disconnected sentences in English and German crossed and recrossed in all directions; here two Englishmen were conversing, one looking up like a cock-sparrow at the other, a tall, fresh-coloured Oxford giant, who dolefully complained that "Rome was so slow."

"Why, when I saw you last you were going to set up a boat on the Tiber!" responded his little friend.

"Couldn't be done. I don't know what on earth to do with myself to-day; Travers has been to the place where the pigs are killed, but he says it's a beastly sight."

"You should do like me, try a tour in the Campagna—beds uncommon hard, fare not so bad—good for your constitution."

The treble of female voices entering drowned the rest. A blooming, red-haired girl was saying to her companions, "Oh, I am half-dead with sight-seeing; we kept it all for Lent, for really we had no energy for it when we were going to two or three parties every night."

"Well, I am glad to have seen Rome, certainly, but I shall be so thankful to go away."

"Off to Naples?" floated across from another group; "you come back for Holy Week?"

"Service at San Luigi, four p.m.; write that down, Louisa."

"Oh, mamma, I am so anxious to hear Père Vaudreuil preach; I wonder if we could get introduced

to Mrs. Mayor; she has a private chapel in her house and—"

Mrs. Dalzell listened with amusement, as she looked down the pages of the arrival book undisturbed, till two of her acquaintances came in, the lady with whom she had driven on the Pincian Hill the first Sunday that she had noticed Vincenzo, the other a gentleman whose face betrayed so sarcastic a nature, that his address, "Pray how are your orphans?" seemed a satire, simple as it was.

"I thought you were gone to Naples," replied Mrs. Dalzell.

"No, I leave that to people who wish to observe Lent strictly. I hope your *protégés* are flourishing?"

"Very, thank you; and I hope you kept your word, and went to see Mademoiselle Mori on Tuesday night."

"I did, and I think you are a bold woman to have anything to do with so admirable an actress."

"Mr. Thornton maintains that no girl could enter so entirely into the feelings of *Adelaide* without having experienced them," said the other lady.

"I hope Mr. Thornton will not whisper calumny to support his theory, which is otherwise quite untenable," said Mrs. Dalzell, not quite as calmly as usual.

"I don't dispute the fact of Mademoiselle Mori being a prodigy of virtue as well as talent," said Mr. Thornton. "No doubt actresses are very different here from what they are in England—I only say you are a bold woman."

"Mademoiselle Mori is a cantatrice," said Mrs. Dalzell, "and you ought to know how much higher

her profession ranks here than that of the 'prose actresses.'"

"Oh, my dear, it is only a part of his systematical disbelief in everything good," said the second lady; "all the world knows that mademoiselle is as good as she is clever. There is no society into which she is not received, and I hear that her brother is such an interesting person. I confess that I did tremble for you at first, especially when I heard that your Irene was to be a cantatrice; but you were wiser than we."

"If Mr. Thornton deserved it, I would introduce him to Signor Mori and his sister," said Mrs. Dalzell; "but with him not even seeing is believing where goodness is concerned."

Mr. Thornton made her a half-mocking bow as she shook hands and left the library. "An extraordinary freak, certainly!" said he; "and yet she is a sensible woman, and not romantic."

"Oh yes, she is indeed; you don't know her," said his companion, laughingly; "she absolutely believes in truth, and honour, and gratitude—obsolete virtues, which wise people like you and me know no longer exist, if they ever did; and strange to say, nothing ever occurs to show her what a sad delusion she is labouring under!"

"She must find this charitable whim rather expensive!"

"No, you are wrong again; I know as a fact that this brother and sister have entirely maintained themselves for some time, and Mademoiselle Mori has already made her profession honoured here; if you sneered at it in Roman society, the *habitués* would

quote her directly against you. The cantatrices have always been tolerably well spoken of, and she has given a sort of credit to them all; I know from many facts that she is as noble a creature as ever existed. Now you may believe me, for you know very well that I am not much given to crediting goodness in any one."

Before Mrs. Dalzell came in again, Irene returned from rehearsal, looking weary and vexed. Vincenzo was at the window, trimming his plants and making friendly signs to Velvet Cap over the way; but he turned round as she opened the door, with a face of welcome. She smiled in answer, but her countenance was clouded still.

"The rehearsal has not gone smoothly? Madame St. Simon out of humour?" asked Vincenzo.

"As usual. We have been rehearsing for three hours, and I am quite tired," said Irene, sitting down wearily. "She will not appear in the *Caio*, half out of spite to me, half because Marchese Cortona is sure to be offended by the new opera. She appeared—pretended to be too ill to sing, but was not too ill to set all the company quarrelling. At last Signor Mattei settled that Emilia Orioli takes her part, I am *Valeria*, Sanzio is *Virginio*, Varchi is *Caio*. The disputes, the vile, mean motives that degrade everything, even music! malice and jealousy and party-spirit—I feel as if I hated it all after such a morning as this!"

"It is the prosaic side of your art, dear Irene."

"Oh, it is all vanity and vexation—all! When I think of what music should be—of what I have in my mind, and how utterly mean, how despicable my best attempts to express it are—Vincenzo, I am ready

never to act again! It is here—in my mind—I have glorious visions here; but oh, it is all failure when I try to give them form. I despise myself and those who applaud me—I can do nothing—nothing!"

"You would do nothing worth doing assuredly, if you did reach your own ideal. That ought to be too high to be ever attained," said Vincenzo.

"And then," continued Irene, who was visibly despondent and excited, "if I were a true artist, should I care as I do for applause not worth having? I could not act without it—I should be cold, uninspired—."

"My dear, you know nothing about it. It is not the mere applause; it is the sympathy, the consciousness of power over the feelings of others, that inspires you, not the plaudits of a crowd. What artist does not feel the same!" And then, as Irene sighed wearily, he added, "You, and all who have stolen a spark of heavenly fire, must take the penalty with it, my dear Prometheus. Come, you want something to sober you —one of Madame Marriotti's musical *soirées*."

"Ah! this is her evening! that will be thorough refreshment. I wonder if we shall all be there to-night. Madame Marriotti has picked up another *alto*, a nice middle-aged Miss Graham; she walked home from church yesterday with Mrs. Dalzell and me. I think it is pleasant to know some English."

"Shall you go on practising that piece of Scarlatti's to-night?"

"Most likely, and a madrigal of Felice Anerio's. There certainly is some attraction about Madame Marriotti, which brings all musicians to her house,

Vincenzino, is it quite impossible that you should go there to-night? I want you to hear us perform."

He shook his head. "My powers of locomotion don't increase. Besides, I have had pleasure enough for one day."

"What is it?"

"A visitor. A Sir Arthur Laurie, who had heard of my carvings, and came to find me out—and why do you think? He has one of our father's paintings, and wanted to make out if I were the same Mori. I wish you had been indoors, that you might have heard how pleasantly he told me how he was delighted with it at the Royal Academy years ago, and bought it. He always intended to look for the artist if ever he came to Rome; and having come at last, he inquired after him, but nobody could give him any information; they thought he must mean me, and said there was a Mori who carved, but did not paint."

"Ah, I suppose that here papa was only one amongst the hundreds of painters; but I never see any pictures like his. If we could but find any of those we were forced to sell!"

"He is remembered in England, however; and Sir Arthur said that if we ever go to England, we must visit him in his house in Northumberland, and see the painting."

"That is pleasant, dear Vincenzo—."

"Il signor—" announced Carmela, looking in, and leaving the visitor waiting in the ante-room.

"Oh, Carmela, do remember to ask visitors in at once—who is it? *Favorisca, signor.* Ah! Signor Sanzio."

"Good morning," said Vincenzo, holding out his

hand cordially to the chief bass singer at Irene's theatre, who being an old friend, on the strength of it presently observed to Irene, "So, signorina, I am glad to see that brow of yours rather smoother than when I had the pleasure of rehearsing with you."

"Oh, I am quite amiable now, signor; but who could have been calm this morning in such a storm of cross purposes? Signor Mattei in despair, Madame St. Simon in open rebellion, all the rest insubordinate."

"Mademoiselle Mori included. I have been advising our manager to change the opera, but—"

"Change the opera!" cried Irene; "let the others triumph!—not for a moment!"

"You are disinterested, signora, for I never heard you in a part less suited to you. You know this new thing that we are at all sixes and sevens about, Signor Mori? A folly got up for the present time; an ancient Roman story to fit modern Roman times, liberty, fraternity, &c. *Va bene*—I dare say your sister has told you all the ins and outs. For my part I think the opera had better keep clear of politics; we are only running ourselves into *imbroglios*, but that I leave to Signor Mattei. However, I must say that the part of *Valeria* is quite unworthy of your sister—she will never make anything of it."

"Indeed!" said Irene, with a little scorn; "wait and see, signor."

She sat down to the piano and commenced the first solo in the forthcoming opera, one where the Roman maiden Valeria described her lover in combat against the enemies of Rome. As Signor Sanzio had said, the opera was a slight thing, got up merely to please the popular taste of the day, and had no chance

against criticism; but Irene put so much soul into her part, that its poverty and triviality disappeared; she created it, in fact; she was singing her own feelings; she too was Roman, and Nota was her hero!

"Ah! you sang very differently this morning," said Signor Sanzio, shaking his head.

"I know—. I could not feel it then. Is it not true that something can be made of *Valeria?*"

"True enough, it seems; but I am convinced that this operetta is a folly—*una pazzeria*. There is a strong party for Madame St. Simon, and she will move heaven and earth to make us fail; her engagement is just out, she is going to Naples, and she will wind up comfortably by spiting you. Besides, I know this will be made a furious party matter; the *Oscurantisti* will raise a tumult as sure as I sing bass at our theatre. Parties are running so high just now, that a feather would cause a revolution."

"Poor music!" said Vincenzo.

"Ay, poor music! she gets into very indifferent society sometimes; one can't keep her in the hands of Santa Cecilia and the angels. It is a trade after all; we cater for the public, and we must please the popular taste, though your sister won't allow it."

"Even Madame Marriotti says something of the same kind at times," said Vincenzo; "but I believe she looks forward to Irene's going to regions where music is better understood."

Irene smiled and shook her head; her hopes centred in Rome.

"Vienna, or London for instance," continued Signor Sanzio. "It would be just as well to go away for awhile; you would come back with fresh *prestige*, and

we should have felt the want of you. At present there is a faction for Madame St. Simon, and that implies one against you; you have more enemies than friends in the company, for all the bad ones are against you, and only the good for you, including myself!"

"You have indeed been an excellent friend, Signor Sanzio," said Vincenzo; "Irene would not now stand as she does, quite free from all the *tracasseries* of the theatre, but for you."

"Pooh—pooh, I only gave her the benefit of a little of my five-and-thirty years' experience of the stage; she would have fought her way well enough, even if I had not been there."

"But you often held out a hand to me, when others stood by, waiting to see me fall," said Irene.

"The only danger for you was, that you were too inexperienced to know evil when you saw it; that wisdom is soon acquired. I knew it would be war to the death from Madame St. Simon from the night that you made so much of that trifling part of *Elvira*, that you quite threw her into the background. She had broken in the poor Bresca so completely, that the girl never dreamed of doing anything but second her, and doubtless it was very unpleasant to find that a new rival had sprung up—such a very intractable one too!"

"I suspect, signor, you have no great love for Madame St. Simon," said Vincenzo.

"Signor Mori, if you could conceive what that woman has made me suffer! I could forgive her airs and caprices and jealousies—all that is allowable to her as *prima donna*, and as woman; but, when I hear her falsifying a great composer's work to show off her voice, I feel capable of any excesses! Now, the very

reason why from the first I had great hopes of your sister was, that she never tried to propitiate the Saint Simon, and never made a point at the expense of truth; when a part was simple, she let it remain so; she follows what the composer indicates; whereas the habits of most singers are such, that Rossini was obliged to write all his ornaments; but sometimes the composer indicates nothing, as in this *Caio*, and she makes far too much of *Valeria*, and that is wrong, for the audience will believe the music worth something."

"If ever I am *prima donna assoluta*," began Irene.

"That is to say, if you are here next season, when we are delivered from the Saint Simon—"

"I should try very hard to make the chorus a little less like mop-sticks. They ought all to feel that they are priestesses of the temple, though of a lower grade, and the scenery might surely be less bad, and our wardrobe more classical."

"In vain—quite in vain, signorina. First of all, the style of *accessory* you are imagining would cost more, chorus and scenery. You can't make a bramble-bush into an orange-tree by money, but you must pay if you want oranges instead of blackberries. A better style of singer would want higher pay. Then, secondly, what do the Romans care for good acting or scenery in the opera? They say, we want singing, not acting; they are content with a voice *molto agile*, with plenty of *fioritura* in it; that alone has made Madame St. Simon popular—she has not, and never had a spark of genius."

"Surely it is our business to improve the public taste, Signor Sanzio, not to take advantage of its low tone."

"Dreams, dreams, signorina; you must go to England. There the opera is for the rich, here it is for the people. If you can inspire us all with your own ideas, *manco male*, but—!"

"It is of no use arguing with you, signor! You spoke of Catarina Bresca just now—why has she not been at rehearsal lately?"

"Ill, I believe. She has been dismissed for non-attendance. I have not heard of her since the night she failed."

"Poor Catarina!" said Irene, "the public little think how cruel they are. That night when she was hissed, I saw her just before the call-boy summoned us; she was leaning against the wall, choking with tears; I tried to learn what was the matter, but she only repulsed me, and then came, '*Signori e signore, si va cominciar*,' and I could not wait. I have never seen her since."

"Ah, poor thing, it has been clear this long while her voice was going."

"What do you suppose will become of her?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "What does become of such as she when they cease to charm the public? I should suppose she had not a farthing in the world. It is no joke to depend on one's voice for a subsistence; a cold, an illness—'tis gone! I shall never forget the look of terror and anguish with which poor Viola once said to me, 'I am losing my voice!' and I could not deny it. Ah, *poveretta*, she died in a garret; she, the queen of cantatrices! She and all the rest of us live like grasshoppers we chirp all the summer, and perish in the winter!"

Vincenzo looked fondly at Irene, and thought with

gratitude that she was not entirely dependent on her voice for a subsistence. She looked sad, and said, "I should like to know something about Catarina; where does she live?"

Signor Sanzio gave the address, but added, "You have done wisely to keep aloof from her, poor thing, so far—for what are you seeking after her now? You know she and others have done many an ill turn to 'Sant' Irene!' Do you know, Signor Mori, that a certain set have bestowed that name on your sister? They declare she lives like an anchorite, and that if she were not a heretic the Pope ought to canonize her!"

Irene blushed, as much past annoyance was thus recalled to her mind. "Did I ever seem to care for their folly, signor?"

"Yes, my signorina, for any one who saw how your lip would curve, and how loftily you carried that graceful head, would have seen that in your heart you did care, and little marvel; but you are no doubt too proud to bear malice."

"I hope so," said Irene, laughingly. "A theatrical life ought to harden one against little vexations, or it would be intolerable."

"If ever you feel cast down and discouraged, as I saw you when you left the theatre to-day, remember this, signorina," said the old man, suddenly changing his bantering, satirical tone for one full of feeling: "you have not lived in vain; you have done honour to our profession; you have raised its character, young as you are. You have proved that a cantatrice may be admired and successful, and yet bear as fair a name as any nun in a cloister. Only keep on as you have begun; I cannot say more than that!"

"Thanks, Signor Sanzio," said Vincenzo, much gratified, and Irene's eyes were glistening with tears that prevented her from replying. Temptations, harass, trials, all seemed nothing at that moment, when her heart thrilled with the consciousness that what Signor Sanzio said was but the truth.

"There, I hear another visitor coming; I shall go," said he, rising; but Vincenzo stopped him with, "No, pray stay; it is Nota."

"Signor Nota? Ah; I generally do have the pleasure of meeting him here," said Signor Sanzio, with a smiling, penetrating look at Irene, whose engagement to Leone was generally surmised, though not formally acknowledged. "Well, signor, have you headed any more deputations to his Holiness lately?"

"No," said Leone, who looked somewhat harassed. "We have too much of such demonstrations. Talk hinders work. Irene, I have been finding out all I can of Nettuno for Mrs. Dalzell; I don't believe it is a place for you to make your *villeggiatura* in."

"What! Nettuno!" said Signor Sanzio, "near the old Porto d'Ansio? A mere village: the sea has eaten away the rocks, till it washes under a thin shell of ground; village, and fortress, and all will be swallowed some day. You are not going there?"

"We heard it was a pretty place, with sea, and oak woods."

"Sea, yes. Forest three miles off, unless you count brushwood. A wretched place; the one good thing about it is the costume."

"I have seen it in Carnival," said Vincenzo; "the girls wear green ribbons in their hair, the wives red, and the widows violet; but I can't help thinking Net-

tuno used to have a Greek costume—why did they leave it off?"

"I can't say—ask the poet."

"The tradition says, that they once wore a kirtle of scarlet, reaching the knee," said Leone, "till the plague swept off half the population; and after this sign that heaven was displeased at their scandalous dress, they changed it. So you don't recommend Nettuno, Signor Sanzio?"

"No, indeed, it would be *villeggiatura* with a vengeance. '*In ogni paese è buona stanza dove si leve il sole*,' as they say in my own Florence; but it is a *stanza* I should hire by the day, rather than the week; and it would be dear at a paul. Well, what news do you bring of public affairs, Signor Nota? I see you have the *Patria* there; the *Alba* has gone mad, I verily believe; I wish Government would prohibit it."

"Oh, you are an *Oscurantisto!*" said Irene, playfully; "that is why you are against the *Caio*."

"Only too old to roll along with the times, signorina. I shall go to Naples, where they are going backwards, instead of forwards. Some day we shall hear of a new kind of Vesuvius there. Oh, what asses, what asses our rulers are here and there, and what days you young rebels will see yet! Ah, you don't believe me! Addio, then, addio; remember what I say about *Valeria*, signorina!"

Seizing his purple umbrella, Signor Sanzio departed, keeping on the shady side of every street, with his canopy over his head, and murmuring something to himself which might have been satire, or might have been song; the odd smile upon his face seemed to hint it was the former.

When he was gone Irene taxed Leone with looking weary and asked if it was the fault of his work in the *Dateria*, or the newspaper which he now edited, or what?

"This is a splendid article in reply to that atrocious paper in the *Alba*," said Vincenzo, taking up Leone's newspaper. "I knew immediately that you had written it."

"It has gone some way towards shaking my influence, Vincenzo. I find that a man who wishes to be popular must lead the cry of the day; once try to hold the people in, and you grow unpopular. We had a stormy meeting again last night; a speech of Clementi's set everybody by the ears; then two or three more spoke, urging violent measures and a Republic. I got up and talked for nearly an hour, and I believe had made some impression; but that ass of a Lelio Olivetti had found his way in, and must needs try his hand at a speech—made a furious, blundering, double-distilled *Papista* one, and there was an uproar as if all the lunatics from Santo Spirito were let loose among us! There will be an outbreak soon, unless some outlet be found for the spirit of the people. If they could only enlist, and march against the Austrians! I got a hearing again, and suggested a volunteer corps, and the idea took; but I don't know whether we shall be allowed to carry it out."

"It will come to that some day," said Vincenzo, and Irene's soft, dark eyes rested anxiously on Leone, who, however, dropped the subject with "And how do you suppose the police have been employed this morning? In sweeping up little red caps of liberty with which unknown hands had strewed the whole Corso!"

Irene laughed, and Vincenzo asked, "Was Ravelli at the meeting last night?"

"Oh, to be sure—the most outrageous there!"

Leone could not help joining in the laugh, and no one thought it necessary to express their entire conviction who was the author of the practical joke that had so much scandalized the authorities.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lungi dal proprio ramo,
Povera foglia frale,
Dove vai tu? Dal faggio
La dov' io nacqui mi divise il vento,
Vo pellegrina, e tutto l'altro ignoro.

LEOPARDI.

ATTENDED by her maid, Irene went to seek for Catarina Bresca, whom hitherto she had only seen with disdain and aversion, as one of those who brought discredit on her profession. Catarina took secondary parts, and had a telling voice, and the beauty of youth and loveliness, when Irene first saw her; but voice and beauty had been fast vanishing of late. The girl was grieving about something, or overworked, or—in short, no one knew or cared what; she had been dismissed from the *corps dramatique*, and was already nearly forgotten.

Irene reached the house whither she had been directed by Signor Sanzio, and leaving her maid below to wait for her, ran up the dark, creaking staircase, and knocked at a door, which opening gave to view a dirty, untidy room, apparently serving for a whole family to live in both by day and night. Two men were busy cutting cameos by the window: a group of noisy children sat on the floor playing at *Lupo*, and

half-a-dozen pigeons walked familiarly about. Irene could hardly make her inquiries heard, but at last was bidden to go up to another story. Here she found a woman spinning, who directed her to an opposite room. "*Passi!*" was returned to her knock, and she entered a small disorderly apartment, where a girl lay on a bed, wrapped in a shawl of gay colours and fine texture, which, though now soiled and dirty, betrayed by its costliness that she had known riches as well as poverty. A ray of sunshine came in through the glowing window panes, and glittered on a half-made Swiss costume, the gaudy hues of which contrasted strangely with the squalid look of everything else. Catarina raised herself up with difficulty, to see who had come in, and a deeper flush came on her thin, hectic cheeks.

"What! Sant' Irene!" she exclaimed, "Sant' Irene here! *Here!* She who would not have touched me with the hem of her gown!" A fit of hard and painful coughing stopped her, and shivering, she drew her shawl closer round her.

"I thought you must be ill, Catarina; I have not seen you at rehearsal all the week," said Irene, taking the girl's fevered hand in her own cool fresh one. Catarina snatched it away.

"Say it out; you have not seen me since the night I was hissed! Ah, the stony hearts! I had not tasted food that day—I was ready to faint; and I had to go on the stage and be hissed for singing false. You may know yet what it is to have to act when your heart is breaking! Oh no, not you; you have rich friends, you can afford to despise such as I am."

"Catarina, I have known what it is to be starving."

"You?"

"Yes, I and my brother; but a kind friend saved us. Will you not let me help you, as she helped me? Indeed, I want to be friends with you, Catarina."

"What did you come here for?" asked Catarina, scrutinizing her face.

"Only to see if I could do anything for you."

"You would not have spoken to me a week ago."

Irene was silent, and the girl broke out passionately, "Oh, you who hold yourselves so high above us poor wretches, what do you know of our temptations, you who are kept like relics in a shrine, and have kind friends and a home! I might have been a saint if I had had a home like yours. I was born in a back street in Naples, and I don't know who my father was; and if people wished to twit me, they cast my mother's name in my teeth! No one about us knew bad from good; we were not ashamed; for we did not know what to be ashamed of; we believed the whole world was like ourselves. I sang at the *cafés*, and Giordani took me as his pupil on speculation; and then I was at the theatres there, and next I came here, and you know the rest. I may as well die now, for I've nothing to live by but my voice, and that's gone—I've no more than—a jay," she concluded with a bitter laugh, as she uttered that word, the most contemptuous, when applied to a woman, in the Italian language.

"I must have often seemed very cruel," said Irene, remorsefully, as she recalled how she had always shrunk from the unhappy girl.

"It was no wonder," said Catarina, too feeble to sustain her vehement tone, and touched by the compassion of Irene's tearful eyes. "You had a right to despise me, I suppose—all the world would do the

same, and those who led me to this would be the first to do so. I have not a creature in the world that cares for me. I have been a leaf blown about in the wind all my life, and the sooner it withers the better. If you were ill, you would have a dozen friends round you. They say you are half Neapolitan, is that true?"

"My mother came from Sora."

"Do you remember her?" asked the girl, studying her face with strange, sad curiosity.

"Oh, yes, I often see her in my dreams."

"Ah, you are not ashamed to name her?" said Catarina, a tear stealing down her hot cheek. "You are happy! No one can taunt you with her name. I always gave money as long as I had any, to buy masses for my mother's soul. I had some one to love me while she lived; and when people taunt me about her, I give them as good as they bring, for I loved her dearly. No one else ever cared whether I lived or died, or I might have been different from what I am."

"Are you really alone here all day?"

"Yes. The neighbours don't like to come much, because they say consumption is contagious. I may not have got it—no doctor has said so;"—Catarina interrupted herself quickly—"They are a set of cowards. There, now I suppose you will not venture here again—I don't know why I suppose you would. You had better not."

Some lingering dislike of Irene, desire to retain this her only visitor, and something of generous fear that she might be injured by her visits to a consumptive girl, mingled in this speech. Irene assured her she had no fear, and reflected what she could do for her.

"Tell me what you want most, Catarina?"

"Everything! I have nothing even to drink. I woke last night dying of thirst, and could not reach a drop of water. I coughed till morning, and at last the woman in the room opposite heard me, and came in."

"Would she fetch what you want?"

"Yes, I daresay she would. Oh, I have so longed for an orange! These last three nights I have dreamed of the orange trees at Sorrento, and when I wake and find myself in the dark in this hole, I would throw myself out of the window, only I dare not—death is so terrible. I could have been so happy if life had been a little less cruel; after all, death can hardly be worse. I am sure I did not ask for much!"

Irene leant over her and kissed her, full of compassion. Catarina looked up astonished.

"No one has ever kissed me so kindly since my mother died!" said she; "if all heretics be like you, there can be no room for Catholics in Paradise. But I shall never get there—our old priest said so long ago."

"Dear Catarina," said Irene, "I have read the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it tells how many people came to Him to be cured of sickness, and blindness, and deafness, but only one is mentioned as having come to Him for nothing but to ask forgiveness for her sins, and that was a woman. She had led so bad a life, that all the city knew of it, and scorned her; and yet, when she came to Him, in the midst of a great feast, He did not send her away."

"Go on; did the Holy Virgin pray for her?"

"No, she does not seem to have been there. This

poor woman came through the crowd, and stood weeping by Him, without even a word; yet He said that, whatever the world thought of her, He forgave her, because she loved Him much."

"Are you sure it is true? is it in our Bible?"

"Indeed it is; ask your priest, if you like, and don't forget it, Catarina!"

"Because she loved much! Then He loved her too, for He would not let her be so wretched as to love without any one loving her again. I should not mind dying, if it were not for purgatory. Oh, I once heard such a sermon on purgatory—it drives me mad to think of it—and it must come!" said the girl, shrinking down and covering her face. Irene knew that she must not combat her persuasion; it would have been useless.

"But if Christ said to you that your sins were forgiven, He could not intend you to suffer more," she said. "Ask Him, Catarina."

"I will. I can do that! Are you going? Shall you come back?"

"Yes, to-morrow. I must go, I have to study my part for next week."

"You are going to take *Valeria?* Oh, Irene, I know Madame St. Simon has been plotting against you, and her great protector Cortona will do anything she wishes! If they should get up a party and hiss you—you don't know what it is to be hissed! I wished once that you should know, and now I wonder why! No one remembered me but you."

"Thank you for letting me help you, Catarina. Make that woman you spoke of get whatever you want; I am answerable for it. And should you dislike to see

Signora Olivetti? She has the care of the sick in this parish."

Catarina had not been so brought up as to shrink from obligation to strangers. The offer was gladly accepted, and Irene departed with a promise of seeing Signora Olivetti, then stepping across into the room of the spinner, she directed her to fetch whatever her neighbour needed. The woman seemed kindly disposed towards the poor invalid, and drew a sad picture of her wants and loneliness. "A fortnight ago, signora, she heard the family who lived below me bewailing themselves because some one had robbed them and stolen away the eldest girl's dowry, so that her marriage could not take place. When the signorina heard that, down she came with five or six *scudi* in her hand, and gave them to the girl—who is now married; and when I asked Signorina Bresca what she herself was to do—for you see I knew she was poor herself—'Eh!' said she, 'Madonna Santa Cecilia will provide for me!" Poor thing, she had not a single paul left and has earned next to nothing since!"

Irene smiled and sighed as she recognised the generous improvident artist-spirit. As she returned into the street, the tray of a vendor of oranges and lemons caught her eye, full of freshly plucked fruit; Catarina's desire for an orange recurred to her, and she could not help buying as many as her hands would hold for her. She ran upstairs again with them, and poured out the fragrant golden treasures on the bed.

"Oh, *Santa Vergine!* it is what I was thinking of! May she reward you, dear Irene!" said Catarina, overjoyed, and Irene once more rejoined her staid duenna below stairs, and went, escorted by her, to Casa Olivetti,

where she reported Catarina's case to the signora, who was one of the ladies appointed by authority to look after the sick and needy in that parish. There was no fear now that Catarina would not be well cared for, and with a lighter heart Irene returned home to study *Valeria.*

Her pulses beat a little faster than usual—with defiance however, not with fear, when she thought of the *Caio.* She knew that Signor Mattei had been strongly urged to withdraw it, and excitement and whispering at rehearsal betrayed that plots and cabals were clustering thickly round the new opera, which in fact had become doubly a party matter; the liberals taking it is a compliment, and the anti-liberals regarding it as an insult. Madame St. Simon, enraged by being set aside by the manager, was bent on humiliating her young rival, and all who favoured her or who had a spite against Irene, ranged themselves in opposition to the *Caio.* The manager would have withdrawn it at last, when he found what a violent party matter it had become, had he not known that this would afford an unbounded triumph to a certain theatre which had been making head against him, and would moreover enrage the liberal party. He did all that could be done to insure success; unusual pains were taken in the getting up, and repeated rehearsals drilled all the performers thoroughly in their parts. All knew that the dangerous moment would be Irene's solo with its ardent apostrophe to liberty. The chances, however, were strong, that her exquisite voice and finished acting would carry it safely through; and in other scenes Sanzio seconded her so well in the rehearsals, that Signor Mattei's courage rose high.

Great was the excitement and trepidation visible among the *corps dramatique* on the night when the *Caio* was to be brought out, and seldom had so overflowing an audience appeared in the theatre. Every box was more than full, there was barely standing-room in the pit, and heated and crushed spectators exclaimed that it was as bad as St. Andrea when Padre Rinaldi preached! The curtain drew up amid breathless expectation; the first scene was a chorus, and Irene did not appear in it; the next was a duet between her and Sanzio, and the applause as she entered was vehement, but partial. If she had only thought of herself, it would have been very formidable to encounter the myriads of curious eyes that scrutinized her from boxes and pit; but there was no shrinking or tremor in Irene; never had she looked so inspired nor so lofty as when she stood, braced up by a knowledge of coming peril; and the two next scenes ended amid rapturous and increasing plaudits, which turned Madame St. Simon, concealed in her box, yellow with jealousy and malice. But the trial point came later, with the solo, which had universally been fixed on as the battle ground. The address to liberty alluded so plainly to the events of the day, that at almost the first lines, a mingled thrill of applause and discontent ran through the house. A version had been prepared, greatly modified from the ultra expressions of the first draught; and this Irene had at first intended to have given, but that show of discontent roused her high spirit; she accepted the challenge, rashly—perhaps unjustifiably—and burst forth with all the power of her rich voice into an apostrophe to freedom. The denunciation of tyrants electrified the audience for a moment. The next, her

notes were almost drowned in an uproar which shook the whole theatre. Hisses, outcries, stamping, stifled the applause, which was still loudly raised by all the liberals present; the orchestra was totally inaudible; every time the noise was lulled, it rose again wilder than before; the pit was a scene of confusion indescribable, voices and gestures let loose—a mimic war. Signor Mattei appeared, and sought in vain with imploring gestures to make himself heard; the chorus shrank terrified out of sight; the contralto, Emilia Orioli, was sobbing from actual alarm; Signor Sanzio stood composedly surveying the tumult, and Irene, with eyes flashing light on those who had insulted her, remained in the full front of the stage, disdaining to retreat, and apparently looking as indifferently on the outrageous audience as the moon on all the dogs that bay at her. Suddenly, above all the uproar, a voice like a trumpet called "Shame," and then her eyes filled with tears, something seemed to choke her, she knew that Leone had seen her insulted, and the cause of liberty insulted in her.

So entirely hopeless was it to quell the riot, that Signor Mattei ordered the curtain to fall, and the company gathered behind it in the utmost consternation, every one except Irene open-mouthed with assertions, declarations, and reproaches. She stood silent, her features full of scorn, making no reply to the blame heaped unsparingly upon her, only when Signor Sanzio said apart to her, "I told you how it would be," she answered, "If I had stayed there all night, they should have heard me at last. Signor Mattei has given them a triumph."

Signor Mattei had just settled that the curtain

should rise again and the prose piece begin, as if the opera had been performed and ended as usual. The uproar had now died out; and, as though to mark the motive of the tumult, the play was received well, and the nerves of the actors experienced no further shocks. Irene had no more to do; and left the theatre with her maid, who was waiting for her. She had not gone three steps when Leone was by her side. "My darling! that they should have dared to insult you! they shall have reason to repent this night! Let me look at you, Irene."

She turned her face to him, now pale and tearful. "All say it was my own fault, Leone; but I did not feel as if they were insulting me, but our cause."

"It was the betrothed of Leone Nota! Oh, they meant to hit more than you, and I had to look on while you stood there, my own Irene! braver than all the cowards who hissed a woman for praising liberty!"

"I did not care, Leone; I was only contemptuous till I heard your voice. I could not be afraid of a miserable mob like that."

"This threatens for the future; perhaps, Ravelli is right, and we shall do nothing with these *Papiste* till we fight them, and show which is the strongest. The cowardly crew!"

"I heard Ravelli's voice and Clementi's, I think. My farewell to this season!"

"Your farewell to the Roman stage, Irene; you shall never appear there again."

"Don't talk of it to-night, dear Leone—I can't think; I can't judge to-night. That sea of madmen is always before my eyes. Ah, I feel now, that a woman

cannot step out of private life without suffering for it. This will grieve Vincenzo."

It was Irene's first experience of the fickleness of popular favour; she was deeply wounded, and felt keenly how bitterly Leone suffered with her. It was well that the season soon ended, and a change of scene gave her overwrought mind time to recover its natural healthy tone. The unhappy operetta was withdrawn, and for the remainder of the season Madame St. Simon had it all her own way.

In the meantime, Irene's leisure was divided between Madame Marriotti, whose vexation at the result of the *Caio* had brought on an attack of illness, and Catarina, who, the day after the failure, sent to entreat Mademoiselle Mori to visit her. Dispirited and worn out as Irene felt, she obeyed the summons and was cheered by the effort. Catarina's vehement sympathy did her good, and she employed herself in making arrangements for the invalid's benefit during her absence. The parting was sad, for she felt that she should never see the dying girl again; no kindness nor care could save her, but at least her deathbed would not be desolate. Catarina's last words to her were, "But for you, I should have died in the street. I should have been less bad, if we had met sooner. Speak kindly sometimes to Clarice Monti, and tell her about me; I think you might save her, if you would."

Irene never saw her again; she died a few days later, murmuring, in her own Neapolitan, some song that she had heard as a child sung by the fishermen on the blue waters that kiss the sunny shores of Naples.

The idea of going to Nettuno was given up; Ma-

dame Marriotti invited Mrs. Dalzell, Irene, and Vincenzo to spend the hot months with her near Florence; and thought herself very fortunate in securing them, for in many things the old lady still resembled a child, she had a child's love of being taken care of and consoled in any little trouble; a solitary journey, or any unusual effort, alarmed her as if she had never faced public life. She had learned to rely completely on Irene, whom she expected, as a matter of course, to smooth everything for her, and fully intended to accompany her in another year to Germany. Irene quietly said that she must have time to consider this plan; she did not think it feasible, and then let the matter drop.

Madame Marriotti's villa at Florence received Mrs. Dalzell, Vincenzo, and Irene, and there Irene turned her mind from theatrical affairs, and rested her faculties till the recommencement of the theatrical season, against which she received an offer of an engagement from the Teatro Regio. It was too good to be refused; Madame Marriotti, therefore, reserved her Vienna scheme until the next season, and Leone reluctantly consented to Irene's reapearance at a Roman theatre.

CHAPTER XVIII.

E non so, e non so,
Se marito prenderò.
Canto Popolare.

Gemma had not calculated the consequences of making herself so agreeable to Lelio Olivetti. She instantly felt that she had fallen into a snare, when Signora Olivetti came to propose him as a *parti;* and, as soon as she was again alone with her mother, she declared, with passion, that nothing should induce her

to marry him; she would kill herself if it were so much as named to her uncle. The poor contessa attempted no reply, but speedily and secretly informed Monsignore Clementi how matters stood, and he appeared in awful majesty in her drawing-room, to subdue the contumacious Gemma; whose conduct in refusing a match so good that (as her aunt and mother both agreed) only her patron saint could have sent it, was absolutely sinful in the eyes of her whole family. Her redoubtable uncle did not waste many words upon the sullen, anger-flushed girl who stood immoveable before him, not even seeming to hear that he addressed her, as he gave her the choice of marriage or a convent. This last alternative would have divided her too hopelessly from Ravelli, and at last she spoke, to declare that, if he attempted to send her to a convent, she would resist till every one in the palace came to see what was the cause of the uproar. There could be no doubt she would keep her word, and Monsignore Clementi actually changed colour at the idea of such a scandal; but he only appointed a certain time in which she was to make up her mind; and then withdrew, leaving her under the ban of his displeasure.

Thenceforward began the combat between Gemma and her family, who all carefully followed out a course of conduct prescribed by Monsignore Clementi. There was neither remonstrance nor reproach, but she was treated as a disgrace to her house, and unworthy of notice. If she spoke, she got no answer; no one ever addressed her; if a visitor entered, she was dismissed; she found exactly the same manner observed to her by her aunt and uncle, as by her mother; and visits to, and with, this aunt had in former days been

Gemma's one variety and relief. The man-servant was changed; perhaps Clementi had divined that he was a go-between of Gemma and Ravelli; she saw no one but her relatives. A better plan for exasperating a violent temper could hardly have been devised. She burst into wild passions, implored, threatened, and met only silence and passive indifference. Her mother, indeed, would tremble and grow pale, but she obeyed her formidable brother-in-law's instructions to the letter, and took no notice of Gemma's outbreaks. Then Gemma threatened to starve herself, and did not eat for a day and a half—no one seemed to perceive it. She besought her aunt to have pity on her, and was answered by reproachful shakes of the head. She spent whole days in her room, but no one called her from morning to night. Her condition was becoming intolerable; she felt that there was only one way of ending it, and of seeing Ravelli once more, since she was never allowed to leave her apartments, and in the absence of her brother and of the Mori, Luigi had no excuse for frequenting the palace.

The count was at Ravenna. He had studiously held aloof from the whole affair; since it would have been inconsistent with his profession of ultra-liberal politics to promote his sister's marriage with a vehement *Papista*; nor could even such important family matters bring his uncle and himself together, so wide was the apparent rupture between them. He thought all communication cut off between Gemma and him whom she preferred, since Irene was at Florence, and Ravelli was fully occupied in surveying for a proposed railroad from Civita Vecchia.

The Olivetti family had gone for a short time into

the country; but monsignore had pledged himself to give a speedy and decisive answer to Lelio. When next he summoned Gemma before him, she consented to the marriage.

It was nothing but a glimpse of Luigi Ravelli that had brought her to this.

One evening, as she leant wearily at her window, high above the street, she had seen him pass, and had been seized with such a longing to hear his voice, to meet him again, that she thought only how to purchase a moment of his presence. She knew that he and his family would be invited to assist at the *Capitoli*, as the legal ceremony is called,—a part of a marriage distinct from the religious ceremony, and performed at the bride's own house. And thus she gave her word.

Monsignore Clementi gave her his benediction and dismissed her, while he announced her consent to the rest of the family. Gemma flew back to her room, pursued by a little greyhound, a gift nominally to the countess from Ravelli. She bolted her door, wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper, and waited at her window. A new idea struck her all at once; she fastened the note to the collar of the little dog, opened her window, and waited again. It was a perilous height above the street. So much the worse for the greyhound; for as a figure passed in the dusk which she recognised as that of Ravelli, she slid the slender little creature through the bars and dropped it without a moment's hesitation. It fell like a feather, and the eager eyes above saw it spring up, shake itself, and run after its old master, who feeling two little paws strike his knee, looked down and saw his former pet. He was delighted at having a good reason for calling in Palazzo

Clementi, stooped down to stroke the little creature, and perceived the note. A presentiment of evil struck him; he opened it beneath a lamp which burnt before a picture of the Virgin—read—and dashed towards Palazzo Clementi. He was half way up the stairs before he recollected that Count Clementi was at Ravenna. He could only ring and restore the greyhound, and was told that the countess saw no one that evening. There was nothing to be done, but wait, like Gemma, for that last interview.

When relations have consented, marriage follows quickly on betrothal in Rome. Almost before Gemma had realized that consent had been wrung from her, the contract was prepared, and Signor Lelio acknowledged as her husband elect. He came immediately to Rome, whither the Olivetti family had now returned, and appeared almost every evening in Palazzo Clementi, where he assuredly did not find Gemma as agreeable as at their first meeting; but he was blind and deaf to her slights and rebuffs; her uncle had promised her to him, and he never thought of asking what her own sentiments might be. Count Clementi took good care that, in the midst of the family favour which now shone upon Gemma, she should be as closely watched as before, and entirely rejected the offer of Lelio to live in Rome, should his future wife desire it. There were few things that he wished more than to see her safely married and gone. So closely was she watched that she could never slip a note into the trunk of the old orange tree, and she only went out with her mother to invite the guests for the evening of the *Capitoli*.

Signor Lelio was in a state of felicity indescribable,

when he thought of the aristocratic alliance he was about to make; he spent fabulous sums on presents for his bride, and did not fail to tell every one how much they cost. He appeared first at one *circolo* and then another, making speeches which excited mingled laughter and wrath; he was always seizing on some reluctant acquaintance to pour out his tale of bliss to him. Signora Olivetti knew beforehand that she must listen to him for an hour at least whenever he could find her; and in short, he strutted about so glorious and so elated that he furnished amusement in half the *salons* of Rome. And all the time he was dogged by a black shadow of vengeance which had long sought after him, and had tracked him at last, but hitherto never alone. Some idea that he was watched by an enemy crossed his mind, and he suggested it to his cousin, Signor Olivetti, who took it as a further proof of Lelio's self-importance, and laughed at him, with the assurance that his life mattered to nobody but himself; but Lelio felt himself a person of importance; he puffed with injured dignity, and turned with his suspicions to the signora, who thought of Ravelli, then was angry with herself, but bade Lelio never go about alone, especially at night—advice which he was delighted to take, and his fears of assassination added a fresh jest to the many already circulating concerning him; though murders were not uncommon, and the laughter at Lelio's alarms was apt to die away into stories of stabbing, of murdered men found lying at their own doors staining the steps with their heart's blood, of priest poniarded for having refused absolution; but these were mostly rumours from the provinces, though such things did happen in Rome itself.

The evening of the *Capitoli* came, and there was a reception in the contessa's apartment; the customary *rinfresco*, or banquet, was offered; for the family had made a great effort to keep up appearances on this occasion; the wedding gifts were arranged conspicuously, and friends and relations began to pour in. Among them were all the Ravelli family; Gemma never looked towards Luigi as he entered, but she saw, nevertheless, that his eyes were upon her, and read wonder, reproach, and misery in his glance. Dressed in white, with a white rose fastened on her boddice, she stood near her future husband, accepting the congratulations offered to her; Clementi was near, her uncle close by; she was environed; she felt that one of the passionate scenes she had lately wasted on them would be worse than useless now, and seemed so self-possessed and calm that they breathed more freely; for Monsignore Clementi himself felt a little afraid of his niece's temper, and as for the contessa — she had suffered a martyrdom during the visits she had been obliged to make with Gemma to invite the guests, expecting every moment an outbreak. But then, as now, the girl only maintained her lowering look, without any manifestation of resistance, and she allowed Lelio to talk to her incessantly, as custom permitted him on this evening; yet her eye glanced on him sometimes, as if she could have struck the exultant coxcomb who paraded his rights so ostentatiously, and called every one's attention so anxiously to the wedding presents, amongst which were conspicuous the diamonds presented by himself, — necklace, ring, and earrings complete. Once or twice she looked from him to Ravelli, as if comparing them, but he made no attempt to approach her.

The notary and his clerk arrived, and there was an instantaneous hush as the assembly gathered together to hear the contract read aloud, with its stipulations concerning residence, *villeggiatura*, and twenty *scudi* a month, *per le spille*, otherwise pin-money. The bride's dowry, a very small one, was handed over in gold in a white pocket-handkerchief to the bridegroom, who affixed his name to the contract; the bride also signed, as did her mother. The religious ceremony was not to take place till a week later. This important matter being accomplished, there was a general move, a tendency to collect round the ices, creams, and *liqueurs;* Ravelli found an opportunity of standing beside Gemma, who was comparatively unwatched, and whispered a few impetuous words in her ear.

"I was driven to it, but I shall never see the inside of a church with him; if you cannot make some plan before this day week, I will escape without you."

Their eyes met; he saw she meant what she said.

"Well, there is only one way — let him look to it," muttered Ravelli, and he drew back; but his eye turned on Olivetti with an expression that had something deadly in it. When the party broke up, Ravelli went out at the same moment with Olivetti; a moment before there had been some words exchanged between them, first courteous on the part of the latter, who, in the plenitude of his happiness, was inclined to patronize even Ravelli, but the next instant they became angry, defiant. It all passed in an instant, and no one observed it but Gemma. There was a general laughing offer among Lelio's acquaintances to wait and escort him, which he declined with great dignity, and departed to his apartment at no great distance from the palace.

Gemma's manner was so much less sullen than it had been for weeks, when she bade her family good night, that her uncle praised her, and said, turning to his nephew, as soon as she was gone, "Take care, she has some plan brewing to-night."

"There is no fear now," said the count, "but I shall watch her."

"Never trust a woman, especially if she speaks you soft, my nephew; it is a still stream that ruins the bridges, and you know 'women have seven spirits in their bodies.' A happy night, my dear sister-in-law; nay, nay, nay" — withdrawing his hand as she stooped to kiss it — "do not think of it! Adieu, nephew;" and he spoke with a cordiality which would rather have surprised the guests, had they still been present; for amongst the little bits of scandal which all had carried away with them, was the exceeding coldness evident between uncle and nephew, and much was whispered concerning the young count's folly or patriotism, according to the politics of the speakers, in sacrificing his chances of fortune from his uncle.

Monsignore Clementi had over-shot the mark when he declared that his niece had a plan for this night, but he did not guess amiss in believing that there was something hidden under that controlled demeanour, which, like the turbid river, allowed nothing beneath to be seen. She leant her forehead against her window hour after hour, expecting nothing yet everything; her heart beat almost audibly in the silence; a little lamp burnt on the table, illuminating the crucifix and a picture of the Virgin on the wall. Above her pillow was a cup for holy water, and one of the blessed palms, brought a few Sundays before from St. Peter's; all in

the chamber seemed pure and innocent, as if aught else would have been misplaced in such a sanctuary. But what were the thoughts that surged in Gemma's breast? Flight, disgrace, was before her, or escape by means which involved cowardly crime in the one whom she loved! She only waited to choose between them. If seven spirits really haunted her, they must have been very evil ones; a good angel must have turned aside, and hidden his face from the look on hers, as she watched the clouds fly over the moon before the *sirocco* that swept through the streets and shook every door and shutter in the old palace that night. Perhaps a consciousness of evil visited her mind; for, starting suddenly up, she flung her handkerchief over the picture of the *Madonna*, and then went back to her excited yet purposeless watch.

Another kept ward for long hours; namely, Clementi, who, though he had the key of the outer-door in his own possession, trusted Gemma so little that he wished to be secure she did not leave her room that night. He had marked the whisper between her and Ravelli, but the look of Ravelli was not that of a man with a scheme promising success. Still, as he muttered to himself, while ensconced in an arm-chair, he listened warily, "With each man be on your guard, but four times as much with a friend; as for Gemma, *La donna ne sa un punto più del diavolo.* There is but one woman in the world whom I could trust, and she is but half a Roman!" and once more he calculated his chances of winning Irene's heart, and how soon he could dismiss Leone from the scene. He surveyed the tangled web of the present, and that still more tangled of the probable future, of which each new day revealed a portion,

and thought long on the predictions of his sagacious and far-sighted uncle, one of the few priests who did not look with horror and dismay on the aspect of public affairs, and prophesied that all would turn out well for him and his colleagues. Count Clementi was, at heart, supremely indifferent as to which party might eventually succeed, except that he looked for some pecuniary advantage from his uncle's good fortune, and had felt as indignant as Monsignore Clementi himself, that all hopes of a cardinal's hat seemed dead with Gregorio XVI. The whole family had looked forward to debts being paid, and their fallen fortunes rising with this event, which, though extremely costly to the new dignitary at the time, is very lucrative in the end.

Convinced at last that Gemma was resigned to her destiny, he gave up his vigil and went to bed, whence he did not emerge till towards luncheon time next day. The contessa had been so wearied by the unusual excitement of the evening before, that she too was unusually late, and did not appear till her son and daughter were about to begin their simple meal, which to-day was augmented by fragments of the *rinfresco.* Contessa Clementi could speak of nothing but the contract and wedding presents, especially Signora Olivetti's — "a shawl, which must have cost at least a hundred *scudi!*"

"I told you, Gemma, she would give you something handsome; and, really that emerald brooch that Signora Ravelli brought you, was magnificent; those people like to give something superb, to show off their wealth a little; they are all rich — it is only the real old noble families that condescend to be poor. The English, who are all merchants, are as rich as empe-

rors. If we had been commoners, your brother would have made a fortune in some profession; but, as we were noble, I could not let him degrade himself; and he could not be an ecclesiastic, for he is the last of the Clementi, and Antonio has no children."

"Oh, Count Arrigo has taken an *impiego*," said Gemma, impatiently.

"Oh, Count Arrigo, they are mere *parvenus* compared to us; I have heard that there was one of our family in the time of some Roman Emperor — Julius Cæsar I think it was — there is no family older than ours, Gemma. I wish Signor Lelio were noble; but then you had no dowry. In my time, however, girls of rank never married at all unless their parents met with a husband of equal rank for them; it would have been a disgrace. But all that seems changed now. I can't think what is to be the end of all these new ideas, and how, Pietrucchio, you can take them up is incomprehensible to me."

"It is the only way left for me to make my fortune, *mamma mia*," said Clementi, with the playful and caressing tone in which he usually addressed his mother, and she smiled and said, "You are a good boy, Pietrucchio — where are you going now?"

"I was thinking of looking for Olivetti; a friend of mine proposed a boar-hunt for next week, and I daresay Lelio will join us, and be delighted to set us all to rights."

"A boar-hunt? it is not the season."

"There is more or less of it all the year round; I saw four boars with magnificent tusks in a shop near the Pantheon yesterday, and all the people were looking at them."

"But if you go out I shall have nobody but Gemma. Signor Lelio might come here, I think; he might wait till after marriage to be so ungallant."

"I will stay, mamma. Close that shutter, Gemma, the sun dazzles her."

"You are always thoughtful, Pietrucchio *mio;* sons are more comfort than daughters. I wish you would marry some rich girl, and then we could all live together, and pay off our debts. It is a great thing to have Gemma provided for."

"I wonder why daughters are born, since all that their parents wish is to get rid of them," said Gemma, in a voice where acute pain and resentment were mingled together. "You are happy now, mamma; it is the first time you ever were pleased where I was concerned."

"Now, Gemma, that is one of your perverse fancies; pray, pray don't get into one of those dreadful tempers! I wish to see you well married of course, since you have no vocation for the convent. Pietrucchio!" said the contessa, imploringly, as if bespeaking his protection from Gemma.

"You need not be afraid, mamma—you will not be burdened with me long, any way," said Gemma, sitting down at some distance. The contessa looked so nervous and shaken that Clementi, who never interfered between her and Gemma, set himself to compose her, and introduced a subject that never failed to interest her—namely, the lottery. "I had no time to tell you yesterday, dear mother, but imagine what a friend of mine has done. His sisters all dreamed of the same number. The eldest one night, the second on the next night, the third on the following one. Of

course they felt it was an advertisement from Heaven; they told their brother, who has no faith in these things. He is a sad sceptic indeed, and laughed at them, but promised to take the number for them. Alas! he forgot entirely, and it has just been announced to be the winning number!"

"See that!" exclaimed the contessa; "I call that a warning from Heaven to him!"

"What do you want, Filippo?" asked Gemma of the servant, who stood at the door making signs unperceived to the count. "Come in."

"What is it? Why does he not speak? Make him tell us, Pietrucchio—I must know—" said the contessa, greatly alarmed by this mysterious pantomime, and Clementi said sharply, "Come in, and say whatever it is at once, stupid fellow."

The man advanced with looks full of horror. "He's dead, signor; they have murdered him!"

"Olivetti!" exclaimed Gemma.

"*Si, signorina, si;* he has been found with a knife in his heart—he is dead and cold!"

"*Asino!* hold your tongue, you will kill my mother!" cried Clementi, as the contessa gasped out some unintelligible words and sank back insensible. "She's dying—here, scents, water—Gemma, help her!"

Gemma was the only one who had not lost all self-possession. Her hand indeed trembled so that she could not open the scent-bottle, but she remembered where it was, and fetched water instantly, and her mother slowly revived, and looked vacantly round as if trying to remember what had caused her swoon. Clementi leant over her, terrified out of his senses at the sudden attack. "There, there, you are better now, darling mother;

there's nothing wrong—speak to me—I am here. Pietrucchio is with you, *mamma mia!*"

"Why don't you give her air? Don't hang over her in that way," said Gemma, in tones strangely harsh and forced, as she opened a window wide. "Do stand back, Pietrucchio; she can't breathe. Mamma, you can go to your room now—let me help you."

"Pietrucchio, Pietrucchio," whispered the contessa, shrinking against him, while he held her hand and called her by every caressing name; "are you there? what has happened? who did Filippo say was killed? Tell me."

"It is some lie about a murder; one hears a dozen like tales every day—I don't believe a word of it, *mamma mia.*"

"Signor Conte, it is true," cried Filippo. "I saw the poor dear signor's valet only just now. The people speak of nothing else; the street was full all the morning of crowds come to see where he was found lying. He was stabbed in the Ripetta; I saw a crowd there when I was out just now going to the market; so I turned down to see, and a woman cried out that it was a friend of the Olivetti who had been murdered, and I went to the poor signor's lodgings and heard it was he from Enrico. Signor Olivetti has gone to Rocca di Passa, but they have sent to tell him. Some say it was for politics, and some that an old enemy had him murdered."

During this speech the contessa gradually understood what had happened, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, "Holy Virgin! who can have done this? Oh, Gemma, unhappy child! it is worse than the marchese."

"You see it is dangerous to ask me in marriage,

mamma," replied Gemma; "but there are the wedding presents to comfort you."

"*Sangue della Madonna!*" ejaculated Filippo, staring at his young mistress; "she will not break her heart for Signor Lelio apparently!"

"Let me take you to your room, dearest mother; Filippo shall tell my aunt—go and tell her, Filippo," said Clementi, putting his arm round his mother, and almost carrying her away. Her feeble lamentations were soon lost in the distance; Gemma remained alone, with a strange look on her face—horror, revenge, triumph mixed together. Her hand closed as if on an imaginary dagger, the scene appeared passing before her; she did not flinch when Clementi returned and asked abruptly, "How did you know who was murdered?"

"It was natural I should think immediately of Signor Lelio."

"Are you a fool, to suppose that pretext will take me in?"

"Not at all, Pietrucchio; I did not say I *feared* it was he."

"Gemma! you knew of this!"

"No, I did not," she answered, without shrinking from the grasp in which he held her arm; "No, I did not," she repeated, and her eyes met his so steadily that his belief in her complicity was shaken, and he released her. She silently raised her sleeve and showed her wrist bruised by his violence. He winced—no man would hurt a woman in cold blood, and she took the advantage he had given her. "I know nothing about it, Pietrucchio, I tell you; I cannot be sorry, but I am not a murderess."

"If you were, it would be little use to find it out now," muttered Clementi; "I believe devoutly that you are capable of it. Of course you won't say if you suspect any one?"

"Take care whom you suspect, Pietrucchio, if ever you mean to see Irene's face again."

"Serpent that you are! and idiot that I was to let you worm yourself into my confidence," said Clementi, through his set teeth; "it will come to open war between us; but I must wait awhile I suppose."

Frequent as assassinations had become under the late reigns, this murder in Rome itself, and of a man well connected, and inoffensive except from his absurd vanity, was so startling that there was a great sensation throughout the city, and unusual efforts were made to discover the criminal. The elder Olivetti offered large rewards; the police arrested several persons on suspicion; but after a tedious examination they were released, as nothing could be proved against them. The only thing that could serve as a clue was a Trasteverine knife, which was found stained with blood near the corpse, and confirmed at once a suspicion that had speedily suggested itself to Clementi, who did not after the first moment believe Ravelli the author of the deed, though his suspicions were again strongly roused by Gemma's evident belief in Ravelli's guilt, and his own strange manner, so unlike his usual one that all remarked it. But if Lelio Olivetti had offended one of the unforgetting, unforgiving Trasteverini, his death was accounted for; and Clementi having made up his mind that one of the *basso ceto*, or populace, was the criminal, was satisfied, and let the matter drop without expressing his private opinion. It suited him well that

the deed should be laid to the door of the liberal party, who were supposed to be offended by Lelio's obtrusive Austrian tendencies; and absurd as the rumour was, it floated far and wide, and gained credence in Roman society, always eager to seize on any gossip, whether it be how a priest sang mass well or ill, or that a man beat his wife in the Trastevere.

CHAPTER XIX.

Happy is he who loves companionship,
And lights on thee, Luigi;
Thy locks jet black, and clustering round a face
Open as day and full of manly daring;
Thou hadst a heart, a hand for all that came—
Mishap passed o'er thee as a summer cloud.

ROGERS.

IT could be no trifle that made Luigi Ravelli's gloom so lasting, and Count Clementi silently sought to discover the cause, and with this object allowed him several opportunities for conversation with Gemma, taking care to be within earshot. Nature had given him the acute eye and ear of a savage; he seemed to hear and see whatever he wished at any distance, but he listened in vain, and Ravelli seemed reluctant to meet Gemma. He could not, however, refuse an invitation one evening to return home from the Circolo with Clementi, and the old spell presently drew him, in spite of himself, to Gemma's side. Clementi was playing at cards with his mother, who did not catch a sound from the other two; yet he heard Gemma speak as plainly as if he had been by her side. He threw new animation into his play, and said something which made the contessa laugh heartily; but his ear was intent on the whisper at the other end of the room, as

Ravelli examined Gemma's work and stooped to pick up her fallen silk. "Really, Luigi, no one has been so much afflicted by Olivetti's death as yourself! How long do you mean to wear mourning for him? You seem quite inconsolable. I think, if I can bear his loss, you might! Now do tell me, did you know anything about it?"

She spoke very low, and glanced towards the card-table. "Come, tell me, Luigi," she persevered, reassured by the attention paid by the players to their game.

"What do you mean?" demanded Ravelli, as low, but so angrily, that a less audacious spirit than hers would have retracted in haste. Not so Gemma.

"Why! Do you mean that he disappeared, so very opportunely, by chance?"

"Do you mean that you take me for an assassin, Gemma?"

"I don't take you for anything shocking; I only want to know why you go about looking as doleful as a death's-head."

"You hold life lightly," said Ravelli, looking down on her almost with repugnance. "You knew this man, you consented to marry him; he is murdered almost at your door, and you are less moved than if your canary-bird had died!"

"I hated that man," she answered hastily, her face changing from its mocking smile into fierce earnestness. "I would have thanked anybody who had poisoned him or me that night! You need not taunt me with having consented to marry him; it was only that I might see you again—you know I should have fled to the world's end before he called me his wife. I

thought you took the only means left to deliver me from him."

"You really believed that I murdered Lelio Olivetti?"

"I saw you exchange not very amicable words with him, and next morning he is found dead," she answered, amazed at the manner in which he repelled her accusation. "I was miserable enough, I am sure, for if any one else had noticed the quarrel, they must have suspected you—how could you be so rash, Luigi?"

He turned from her with a look, as if she, whom he had thought so fair, had turned into a serpent before his eyes. She saw, and rising, stepped before him. "What do you mean? What have I said? Tell me what you are thinking of."

"I think—why I think that I know you better than I did—and so—*addio*, contessina."

"Are you mad? What is it, Luigi?"

He would not take the hand put out to stop him, but passed impetuously by, and the contessa, awakening to the fact that her daughter was almost *tête-à-tête* with a young man, called her to come nearer the light.

"What were you telling Gemma, signor?"

"I was saying adieu, Signora Contessa; I am obliged to go."

"Already? My salutations to your mother, and Signora Olivetti, when you see her. I suppose you are going there. *A rivedervi*, signor. Pietrucchio, I have won a paul—no, two; what good fortune! and a grosso!"

Clementi rose to accompany his friend to the door,

and bid him an affectionate good night. Gemma never looked up till Ravelli was at the door—then she lifted her eyes and met his—their expression stung her intolerably. She sat reflecting on what had passed, and wondering what had happened to him, and Contessa Clementi pursued her game with the remark, "Something must have gone wrong with young Ravelli—he looked perfectly *bouleversé*. Pietrucchio, it is you to play."

Ravelli had no thoughts of going to Casa Olivetti that night. He wandered towards St. Angelo, and leant upon the parapet of the bridge, watching, without knowing that he did so, the tawny water flow beneath, eddying against the piles, and breaking the reflections from the lamps near into long shimmering trails of light. A red star was rising against the most distant houses whose line, dark and indistinct, followed the bend of the shore. One or two boats passed under the bridge with a couple of dark figures in each, doubtless fishermen; a light burnt afar in a window over the river, as if some Hero kept watch for a Leander. Great fleecy clouds almost hid the moon, which nevertheless at intervals came out into the clear and tender blue of the sky; the night was perfect in its southern beauty, tranquil, refreshing, bringing rest and calm after the labour and heat of the day. Its breeze blew cool on the brow which Luigi bared to it, but the fevered thoughts that rushed through his mind required a mightier magic than any sweet hour of the night possessed, to quiet them. After long meditation, he uttered an audible exclamation, and starting upright, walked away without a glance at the peaceful scene around him.

Luigi shunned Palazzo Clementi and Casa Olivetti alike for some days, until his father entrusted him with some business to transact with Signor Olivetti, which obliged him to visit the latter house. He would rather have gone ten miles in another direction, and wished himself making measurements at Civita Vecchia, though under the hottest sun of the dog-days, rather than at Casa Olivetti; but it was not worth a quarrel with old Signor Ravelli, and he went. Signor Olivetti was out, and he had to await his return; the salotto was unoccupied; Luigi gave himself up undisturbed to thoughts of no very cheering kind, and even his attitude showed his dejection. The opening of the door roused him; Imelda looked in, coloured on seeing who was there, and was about to withdraw with a timid "I beg your pardon;" but she had observed his melancholy, and instead of going, came in, and lingered to hear if he were going to say anything to her. His betrothed was the last person whom Luigi wished to see, but a glance at her, as she stood before him with her serious, child-like grace, banished his perceptible vexation, and he said, "I am waiting for your father, but nothing is to be seen of him."

"He will very soon be at home; Cardinal Torquati sent for him this morning. Mamma is taking her *siesta*," said Imelda, conscious that every rule of etiquette bade her go, but detained by a stronger feeling. Luigi made some remark about the heat, to which she returned an answer without knowing what she said; then, taking her courage by both hands, as it were, asked—"Luigi, is anything the matter?"

"What should be the matter?" he answered, much surprised.

She looked up at him with her soft wistful eyes, as if to say that she felt that something was wrong. Ravelli said, abruptly, "Imelda, you are the last person whom I should like for a confessor—you would understand a sin too little to forgive it."

"But unless it were against me I should have to sympathize, not forgive," said Imelda, encouraged.

"As if you could sympathize with a crime—you little white dove, who wonder why crows are black!—I am not thinking of a trifle, such as a hasty word, but of crimes; do you know what a crime is? murder, for instance."

"Oh, Luigi! but after all it would be the person, not the crime that I should sympathize with. Surely no one could want comfort so much as a man who had done such a dreadful thing as a murder? he would be so unhappy!"

"You are right," said Ravelli, absently; but recollecting what he was saying, he thought he saw her start—"Don't be alarmed, I am not speaking of myself."

"No," said Imelda, with a little light laugh at the idea that he could have supposed that she thought so.

"You think it impossible for me to commit such a crime? for any one?"

"It has been done," said Imelda, low and shrinkingly, as she glanced at her mourning dress.

"Ay. Suppose I could tell you who did that deed—or suppose that you were told that I did it, on the best authority? what then?"

He seemed quite serious; Imelda answered, wonderingly, "I should not believe it—" and then, gaining

fresh courage from feeling that she was becoming his confidante, "not if you told me so yourself."

Was it that sympathy always had irresistible charms for Luigi, or that he sought to get rid of the depression so foreign to his nature by any means—even by confiding in Imelda? Probably both, for he exclaimed, "Imelda, Imelda, you don't know what you are saying—you fancy all the world as peaceful as your own home—what would you think of man's life if you knew a tithe of it? Why I—now you stand by me you look at me as if you believed me as innocent as yourself—what would you say if I told you that a fortnight ago there was a man whom I hated, so that I had resolved that he or I should visit Purgatory before another day was out. Never mind who he was—no, I may as well tell you—your cousin, Lelio. If I did not murder him, I let him be murdered—there is little difference. There! you turn pale and shrink away—I knew how it would be!"

"It is so horrible to think of his death," said Imelda, shuddering, but still remaining by Ravelli's side. "How could you have anything to do with his death? he was stabbed."

"Well, what reason is that?"

"He was assassinated," repeated Imelda.

"Ah! I understand," said Ravelli, with a look of satisfaction; "you mean I should have tried fair fight. True—you know me better than some, whom I expected to trust me. Listen, I'll tell you how it was. That night—when—when—he was murdered—before we left the palazzo—he asked me to walk home with him—the old story, he fancied he was dogged by some one. I only wanted an excuse for a quarrel;

I insulted him, told him he was a coward: when one man says that to another you know what comes of it. We had not much to settle after that; we went downstairs together, settled time and place, and parted. I had not gone a hundred yards when I heard a shout for help—turned back—there was a minute's scuffle between two people down the street—one fell, the other made off at full speed—I after him—I caught him before he reached a *vicolo* he was making for; he had dropped his knife, so it was fair fight between us; we wrestled together—I got him down at last, and saw his face; he was a Trasteverine—I knew him—it was the father of the boy whom Lelio struck in Villa Borghese. You had not heard of it? that was the motive; a Trasteverine never thinks a blow can be wiped out without blood. I knew that—and—let him go. I suppose I ought to have had him executed; and whether I let him escape because Lelio was my enemy, or because the way he treated that lad was so brutal, is more than I know. I went back to your cousin—he was quite dead; there was nothing to be done. When I found that, I began to think it might be a case of beheading me instead of my Trasteverine friend, if I were seen there. Not a creature came that way from the palace—they all lived in other directions. I lingered about all night till some one came by soon after dawn, saw the body, and raised an outcry. That night—I nearly went mad—I walked up and down the side-streets; whenever I turned towards the Ripetta I seemed to see in a moment that black heap in the distance, and then I thought he called or stirred. I went once all the way into the Piazza di Spagna, but some demon drove me back to

look at that dead man, his face turned up towards the moon—horrible!—a look to haunt one for ever—they say men always look so who die by a stab; and while I was leaning over him the wind waved a corner of his cloak—I thought he had come to life and was looking at me with that ghastly———Imelda, I must be mad outright to tell all this to you—poor child, what was I dreaming of?"

He passed his arm round her, and pale and trembling though she was, she leant against him and slid her hand into his, and he kissed it as he had never yet done in all their familiar intercourse.

"If you can hear all this without renouncing me, Imelda, there is some hope for me; where could you have learned to be so charitable?"

"Thank you for telling me," whispered Imelda.

"Tell no one!" said Ravelli hastily, as a doubt of the safety of his secret occurred to him; "there are some who might not believe me as innocent as you do."

"Oh no, of course I shall tell no one; mamma has always said it is wicked to betray a secret."

"*Fidare era un buon uomo, Nontifidare è meglio,*" said Ravelli, quoting between jest and earnest a well-known proverb.

"*Chi è in sospetto è in difetto,*" answered Imelda, with more liveliness than she often ventured to show before Ravelli, who laughed and said with almost his usual light-heartedness, "I suppose that women can keep their own secrets, if not other people's."

"Then this shall be my very own."

"I cannot understand why you women are not more shocked, Imelda. I should have expected you to look on me as a monster made manifest, when I tell

you I intended to shoot a man as if he had been a wild beast, and that I was the cause of his death, for, but for what I said, he would not have gone home alone."

"I think that it is very sad you should have felt so," said Imelda, "but you cannot be answerable for the murder; you did not believe he really had an enemy, and I have often heard papa laugh at the idea. He said it was only a proof of how important poor Lelio thought himself. And you have been so unhappy, Luigi; that is all that one can do when one has been wrong. I am sure any priest would give you absolution directly."

"Yes, I have been unhappy, as you say, Imelda," replied Ravelli with a sudden return of gloom. "Heaven knows that is true. But whether I should not have brought that man to justice—"

"I think I should have let him go," said Imelda, hesitatingly, and the idea of her doing battle with, and magnanimously releasing a ruffian who had well-nigh mastered himself, almost moved Ravelli to laughter.

Signora Olivetti's entrance arrested the conversation—the first which Imelda had ever had alone with Luigi. Her mother's look of surprise reminded her of how great a breach of etiquette she had committed, and she blushed like a rose when Signora Olivetti said, "If Luigi were not so soon to be your husband, I don't know what I should say, Imelda."

Ravelli smiled, and the prospect did not seem at that moment unwelcome. It was the perception of this which made Signora Olivetti spare her little daughter any further reproof, and cease to question her as to

what Ravelli had said to her when she found Imelda for the first time reluctant to answer.

Ravelli stood in a peculiar position with regard to Imelda; a kind of family compact had existed from her babyhood that she should be his wife, and she was now nearly sixteen, quite old enough, according to Roman notions, to be married. Signora Olivetti had divined the true reason of all the delays, which old Signor Ravelli sought to explain away, but she kept her suspicions to herself, and did not enlighten her husband; she had desired the marriage for years; Luigi was in almost every respect the husband whom she would have selected for Imelda—he was manly and spirited, he had never gambled or been dissipated; he was very different from the *blasé*, effeminate, graceful set of young men, to whom other mothers gladly gave their daughters; but Signora Olivetti would rather have seen pretty Imelda in her grave than have given her to a husband whom she could not love and respect. When she heard of Luigi's mad freaks, or his daring riding, and his beautiful horse, all of which were renowned in the races got up by the English in winter, on the Campagna, she only thought she liked him all the better, even if he were a scapegrace, and that Luigi was worth all the idle, harmless youths of her acquaintance whose "affairs of the heart" were their only employment, to the scandal of their families, and the profit of no one. Bitterly did she regret that she had ever allowed Gemma to visit Imelda, and anxiously had she sought to marry the young countess to some one—no matter to whom—so she were but disposed of! Imelda had been the delight, the happiness of years to her; to secure her entrance into a family which would

cherish her, was the aim of Signora Olivetti's life. Naturally she thought more of this than did her husband, who desired the marriage because the Ravelli were very old friends and wealthy; but his wife knew from bitter experience, how wretched the life of a young bride might be, unless kindly received by her husband's family, under the common Roman system of bride and bridegroom living with the father and mother of the latter. Before Imelda was released from her swaddling-clothes, her mother had looked forward to giving her the meek Signora Ravelli as a mother-in-law, and vowed, silently, that this child should never go through what she herself had done.

Imelda was very fond of Signora Ravelli, and even of the irascible old father of Luigi, who, for her, had always a joke and a caress, and smoothed his brow at the sight of his little daughter-in-law elect. She found double favour in his sight, as an heiress and the child of a very old friend, and, most of all, as his own choice for Luigi; and no one could wonder at his astonished wrath, when Luigi, after having known and contentedly regarded this match for years as a thing fixed as fate, had suddenly turned round, and absolutely refused to hear of it, without assigning any reason for the change. To his mother he was more communicative, but Signora Ravelli was submissive as a slave to her husband, and would have been perfectly ill at the bare idea of opposing him, even for the sake of her darling Luigi. Moreover, though she tried to say that she liked Gemma, to please him, she could not do so. The thought of having this girl for a daughter-in-law, instead of sweet little Imelda, positively terrified her; and, though she listened to his

confidences with the most unwearied sympathy and patience, Luigi knew that she could not, and would not, help him. His own strong will was, however, quite a match for his father's, despotic and imperious as the old man was. Alternately indulged and checked by him, and invariably spoiled by his mother, Luigi had not been trained to submit in such a juncture; and fiery scenes were but too frequent in Casa Ravelli. But the father had one strong hold over his son—without his good pleasure Luigi had not a penny in the world.

The rupture with Gemma had now led to a truce; Ravelli could not think of her without anger and bitterness; he visited Casa Olivetti constantly, and found amusement and interest in the conversation of Imelda, now that she had gained a little confidence with him. But in all his fluctuations the thought of Gemma was never long absent, causing feelings anything but gentle, and yet always present even when he lingered by Imelda's side in the window, where they often sat, under Signora Olivetti's eye, but far enough off to talk unheard. Imelda took courage to tell Luigi of her favourite occupations, her little hopes and fears, and won him sometimes to speak of himself, and those were happy evenings for both; but often his thoughts had flown to the old stormy, precious interviews snatched in peril, and lasting but a few moments, yet worth whole days of calmer pleasures, which he and Gemma used to have on the stairs of Palazzo Clementi.

And, when he left Casa Olivetti, his steps would turn towards the palace, to be withdrawn in anger and shame. He would go home to recite the *rosario* devoutly with his family; go out into society again, and

his first glance round the room was to see if Gemma were present; and once they met and spoke coldly for a moment, then parted; both full of feelings that would have burst out in defiance of conventionalities and witnesses, had they given way to them for one instant; and yet no one saw more than a slight, indifferent greeting passing between them!

The shock occasioned by the glimpse which Gemma had given of her true self, was after all not strong enough effectually to detach Ravelli. He met her again in the Corso, as she went to mass with her aunt; he bowed, and passed on, but he thought her face looked pale and changed; he heard, accidentally, that she had been ill. An invitation from Clementi to spend the evening with him at the palazzo was irresistible, and that night beheld him as much Gemma's slave as ever.

The elders of the Olivetti and Ravelli families would not have taken his vacillations patiently, but that the death of so near a relative as Lelio, put Imelda's marriage out of the question for the present.

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